

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE DROPOUT CRISIS

HEARING OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS UNITED STATES SENATE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION ON EXAMINING THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE DROPOUT CRISIS

NOVEMBER 1, 2002 (LAS CRUCES, NM)

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2002

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:00 a.m., in the School Board Hearing Room, Las Cruces Public Schools, 505 S. Main, Las Cruces, NM, the Senator Bingaman presiding.

Present: Senator Bingaman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BINGAMAN

Senator BINGAMAN. I would like to begin by thanking the Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Senator Kennedy, for agreeing to convene this field hearing to discuss an extremely important topic—dropout prevention.

Education has always been a top issue of debate in Washington. Recently, the debate has focused on crucial issues such as achievement gaps between disadvantaged students and their peers, teacher quality, and parental choice. I support putting these issues on the top of the agenda—on the Federal as well as State and local levels—but not enough attention is being given to the issue of dropout prevention.

The Problem is dropout statistics. The most recent data shows that more than 10 percent of the young adult population dropped out of school from 1999-2000. Among Hispanics, the percentage was over 27 percent.

In October, 2000, approximately 3.8 million young adults were not enrolled in a high school program and had not completed high school. Over 3,000 young people drop out of our high schools and middle schools each school day. Nearly half a million students in grades 10 through 12 drop out of school each year.

Although we have shown some progress in recent years, New Mexico remains at the bottom of the list nationally in terms of dropout rates, 46th in the Nation in 1998-99. During the 1999-2000 school year, almost 6,000 students dropped out of school in New Mexico.

As is the case nationally, the problem is magnified for certain groups of students in our State. The Hispanic dropout rate is twice that of whites and the Native American dropout rate is one and one half times that of whites. 7.8 percent of Hispanics; 5.8 percent of Native Americans; 3.9 percent of whites. Despite the distressing dropout problems in our State, there has been little concerted effort

to provide or coordinate effective and proven dropout prevention programs for at-risk children.

Federal Efforts to Address the Problem:

On the Federal level, I have worked to secure attention and resources to address this issue for many years. At my request, in 1996 and 1997 a group of nationally recognized experts assembled to help find solutions to the particularly high dropout rate among Hispanic students. The Hispanic Dropout Project found widespread misunderstandings about the underlying causes of high dropout rates, and a lack of familiarity about effective dropout prevention programs has prevented schools from implementing programs to decrease dropout rates.

In the fiscal year 2001 budget, we were able to secure a small pot of Federal funds to create the Dropout Prevention Demonstration Program, modeled on the recommendations of this panel of experts. Under this program, 10 to 15 awards of \$200,000 to \$500,000 were given to State Educational Agencies and Local Educational Agencies to strengthen and expand effective dropout prevention programs. Gadsden Public Schools was one of the recipients of those awards. We look forward to hearing about their progress later this morning.

The large education bill signed into law earlier this year, The Leave No Child Left Behind Act, included legislation authorizing an expansion of this program. This program authorizes \$125 million in Federal funding for districts to implement proven dropout prevention strategies. The bill also provides for the creation of a national clearinghouse to disseminate information on research, best practices, and available resources to help schools implement effective school dropout prevention programs, and establishes a national recognition program to spotlight schools that do successfully reduce their dropout rates.

We also were able to secure authorization to expand the Smaller Learning Communities Program. Using funds from this program, at least half of the high schools in Albuquerque have implemented Smaller Learning Community or schools-within-schools programs. These programs help large high schools to create more individualized learning environments for students. There are many benefits to these programs, one of which is reduced dropout rates. For example, Cibola High School, in Albuquerque, used just such a focused effort and a small Federal grant to reduce its dropout rate from nine percent to less than two percent in just 4 years.

We also secured authority to create an Advanced Placement program that for the first time will provide Federal funds on the local level to expand access to Advanced Placement Programs. This program is not directed toward dropout prevention per se, but rather focuses on raising standards at the high school level so that students are better prepared for a postsecondary education. Nevertheless, as the witness from the Hobbs School District, Superintendent Rounds will testify, when integrated into the curriculum, even in the early grades, this program can have a positive impact on dropout rates.

As many of you know, the No Child Left Behind Act also included new expanded accountability for student performance. The

primary focus of this new accountability system is improves student performance on statewide assessments.

The increased focus on assessments has led many to fear that dropout rates will increase as States strive to meet their academic performance goals. There is a real danger that kids that aren't doing well on the tests will be the ones most likely to drop out. To respond to these real concerns, we added dropout reduction as a factor that must be considered when judging school performance. But we must do more. We must also provide schools with the resources that they need to implement effective programs.

Need for Additional Resources:

So far we have secured some funding for each of the Federal programs that I have outlined and last year were able to secure major increases for the core Federal programs impacting poor students, including the Title I program and the Teacher Quality programs, but the President's budget provided virtually no increase in education funding and zero funded the Dropout Prevention and Smaller Learning Communities Programs. This is extremely short-sighted.

The economic impact of the dropout problem is real. A recent study found that graduating from high school can increase a person's earning by \$1.60 per hour while each year of work experience only increases earning by 7 cents per hour. But education can also bring other less tangible benefits to those pursuing it and the non-monetary losses flowing from dropping out can be real and devastating to the individual and to society at large. We must work together to address this issue.

It is my pleasure to introduce the many distinguished witnesses who have traveled here today to share their wisdom on this topic. All of the witnesses have dedicated themselves to helping children succeed. I thank them for their willingness to come today and for all of their good work. Many of the witnesses will present testimony about successful efforts on the State and local level directed at dropout prevention. All of the witnesses will share their perspectives on how we can work together to more adequately address this pressing problem.

STATEMENT OF KRISTINE MEURER, Ph.D., DIRECTOR, SCHOOL HEALTH UNIT, NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; KAREN SANCHEZ-GRIEGO, STATE COORDINATOR ENLACE PROGRAM; McCLELLAN HALL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL INDIAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROJECT IN GALLUP

Senator BINGAMAN. Dr. Meurer.

Ms. MEURER. Good morning, I am Dr. Kristine Meurer, Director of the School Health Unit of the State Department of Education. It is a privilege for me to be here representing the State Department and State Board of Education at the invitation of Senator Jeff Bingaman. We look forward to providing testimony on this important topic of dropout prevention and the Senate's Health, Education and Pension Committee.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Michael Davis, sends his greeting and an apology for being unable to attend this hearing. The State Board of Education is also meeting today in Santa Fe.

We truly appreciate the work that Senator Bingaman does on behalf of New Mexicans. In particular, he has become a champion of many programs to improve public education and the educational outcomes of our children.

A specific area of his attention and concern has been students who drop out of school before earning a diploma. He has been diligent in calling this concern to the attention of educators and the public, and has been a leader in seeking and securing resources to address the needs of students at risk of dropping out.

The State Department of Education wishes to go on record in support of Senator Bingaman's efforts to continue to fund the Federal dropout program that he has been so instrumental in establishing. We hope that our testimony today will reinforce the fact that the concerted efforts of policymakers and educators can have a tremendous positive impact on school completion.

The primary focus of my remarks will be to provide an overview of the status of the dropout problem in New Mexico. Those of you who are familiar with the topic are aware that there has historically been a good deal of confusion and frustration in understanding and interpreting dropout statistics due to the wide variety of methods that were used to collect, compute and report this data. To remedy this problem, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has attempted during the past two decades to establish and get all states to agree to adopt a standard methodology to report dropout data. New Mexico adopted the NCES standards and definitions in 1992-93, and is one of 37 states currently using this methodology to report results. This standardization ensures the reliability and consistency of New Mexico dropout data for the past decade.

The method used by New Mexico to report statistics is called an "event" rate. This statistic represents the students who drop out of school during a specific school year and don't re-enroll without completing a high school program. This measure provides important information on an annual basis of how effective we have been in keeping students in school.

So how has New Mexico fared in the past decade using NCES dropout standards? As you can see from our table, our dropout rate in 1992-93 was 8 percent. Over the next 2 years it climbed to 8.7 percent. Senator Bingaman and State policymakers expressed great concern about this increasing trend and challenged educators to better address the needs of students at risk of leaving school prematurely.

As a result of this public attention and their own concerns about increasing dropout rates, educators began to focus more intently on solutions to this problem. Many schools and districts developed and implemented strategies to identify and intervene with students at risk of dropping out, and to attract dropouts back into their programs. At the same time, the State Board of Education and the State Legislature collaborated on a proposal to add an "at risk" factor to the public school funding formula to increase district resources to support intervention programs.

State law established the at-risk factor in 1997-98, and schools used this resource to expand existing programs and establish new programs. The increased attention, focus and resources are work-

ing. New Mexico's dropout rate has been steadily declining since 1994-95. The reductions have been significant, as you can see from this table today. It is my privilege to release for the first time the statewide dropout rate for the 2000-2001 school year. The dropout rate is 5.3 percent. This is the lowest dropout rate since New Mexico began reporting dropout rates in 1977-1978. The 2000-2001 complete dropout report with data on the performance of all schools and districts in the State will be released in December 2002.

As significant as the percentage reduction has been since 1994-95 the actual numbers have even more impact. The 1994-95 rate of 8.7 percent represents 7,792 students who dropped out that year. The 5.3 percent rate for 2000-2001 represents 5,095 students. In other words, New Mexico educators have been successful in developing strategies and programs to keep 2,697 students in school that would have been dropouts just 7 years ago.

The NCES also uses US census data to report "status" dropout rates, which measure young adults ages 18-24 who are not currently enrolled in school and who have not received a high school diploma or GED. This statistic has also improved significantly in New Mexico since 1994-1996, 78.8 percent, compared to 83 percent in 1998-2000. While this is still slightly below the national completion rate of 85.7 percent, New Mexico now out performs our neighboring states of Colorado, 81.6 percent, Texas, 79.4 percent, and Arizona, 73.5 percent, in high school completion rates.

Schools have also made considerable progress in reducing the dropout rates for ethnic populations with historically high dropout rates. The dropout rate for Native Americans in 2000-2001 is 5.9 percent, a reduction from 8.6 percent in 1994-95. Schools have also had success in impacting the area where dropout rates have always been the highest in New Mexico, Hispanic students. The rate for these students has fallen from 10.9 percent in 1994-95 to 6.7 percent in 2000-2001.

This is extremely good news and cause for congratulations to the New Mexico educators who have been instrumental in this turnaround. But there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that all students complete a high school program and have the opportunity to pursue a career or further education options of their choice.

I hope you will have the opportunity today to hear directly from some of the practitioners responsible for these positive statistical trends. While policymakers and State and district administrators can help create the climate for successful dropout prevention programs, it is the dedication of those who work in the "trenches" that keep kids in school. Credit should also be given to those thousands of "at-risk" students who have overcome challenges and persevered to complete their high school education.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to spend a few minutes reviewing the current priorities of the State Board and the State Department of Education in addressing the needs of high-risk students.

The State Board continues to place great emphasis on early literacy as a primary strategy in ensuring success in any student's mid-school and high school years. The Board is committed to the goal of having all students reading at grade level by grade three.

Funds made available to the State under the “Reading First” program of “No Child Left Behind” (the Federal reauthorization of ESEA) will provide our State with over \$8 million this year to support literacy in grades K-3. We are proud that we are among the first ten States to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education for this program due to the quality of our application, and we are confident that research-based approaches to literacy will help us reach our grade three goal.

The State Board has also placed a priority on student completion by including recommendations for high school reform in its 2003 legislative package. The Board is highly supportive of changes in law, regulation and practice that will give greater flexibility to schools in designing programs to meet the diverse needs of their students. This will allow schools to better align coursework and graduation requirements to post high school pathways selected by students.

The Board is also proposing programs that will provide more stability and consistency when students wish to get concurrent high school and college credit by taking a course at a local post secondary school. In addition the Board is proposing a “middle college” pilot that will allow students to work on both a high school diploma and an associates 2-year degree in a compressed period of time.

The Board is also looking for opportunities for students to earn credit through high quality virtual schooling options.

I would also like to briefly mention a dropout prevention program that is currently being piloted through a partnership between the State Department of Education and the Department of Health. Senators Bingaman and Domenici have been instrumental in providing Federal funding for this pilot. I have been personally involved in both the development and implementation of this program, and am highly optimistic that this will prove successful.

The dropout prevention pilot project’s name is PASS-Positive Assistance for Student Success. For the next 2 years three high schools in New Mexico, Cuba, Belen and Espanola Valley High Schools, are each receiving \$183,000 to participate in the pilot project.

The pilot project is providing direct support to 9th grade students who are struggling with grades, attendance or personal issues, which make them more likely to drop out of school. The goal of the program is to provide support to students and their families early in their high school education so that they are less likely to see dropping out of school as their only option. Struggling students are referred to case managers who work with the student, their family and the school community to identify problems and create positive solutions to help the student succeed. The case managers also help students and families find other in-school and community services that will support them. The funds are also being used to develop support services in each pilot school such as tutoring, mentoring, and mental health counseling for at-risk students.

The coordinator of the PASS program, Nissa Patterson, is here today. She provides ongoing technical assistance and training to the pilot schools and the case managers.

In summary, we have accomplished a great deal, but there is still much work to be done to ensure that all students complete high

school. I will be glad to respond to questions or to obtain any additional information requested by the committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the State Board and State Department of Education.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Meurer may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. Ms. Griego.

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. ENLACE “ENGaging LATino Communities for Education” is a regional and statewide collaborative for the purpose of leveraging educational impacts for success among Hispanic youth. ENLACE in New Mexico is a movement embraced by the community to strengthen a collaborative effort to affect our educational pipeline. 45 percent of Hispanic students in the State of New Mexico do not graduate from high school, therefore, not affording them the opportunity to obtain a higher education. Fifty percent of Hispanic students on New Mexico higher education campuses do not receive their degrees.

New Mexico received W.K. Kellogg Foundation funding in the amount of \$49 million for 4 years to address Hispanic higher education.

125 institutions applied for the initial planning grant, with 30 of the 125 received planning funds based on this proposal. New Mexico was one of the 30 to receive \$100,000 for the planning phase.

The planning moneys were to be used to determine barriers to educational success, create and establish well-designed programs that would assist Hispanic students in the State of New Mexico to graduate from high school and go on to college. All programs system address the K-16 pipeline.

Programs were developed with the partners in our community: Parents, families, business, nonprofit organizations, community grass-roots groups, students, professors, teachers, educational institutions, administrators, and New Mexico charity groups. This recognizes that education is everyone’s business.

Out of the 30 States which received a planning grant, only seven States were given implementation grants. New Mexico was chosen as one of the seven States.

There are four grants in New Mexico, one in the southern part of the State, Las Cruces; northern part, Santa Fe, Espanola, etc; and central New Mexico, Albuquerque; as well as an overall State grant, which encompasses all of New Mexico.

Our goals are to make systemic changes in our educational systems that are positive and productive for Hispanic students.

We are also looking at national policy changes in reference to Hispanic students and the future of their education.

In the creation of this statewide collaborative model, our goal was to have a strong impact statewide, and this is currently being done. We have seen significant potential for the future in terms of making history in statewide educational development with others. It took several leaders from across our State with higher education leading the charge to have a dialogue to work toward programs that are best for Hispanics in our State kindergarten through college, and do this with limited funding.

Together we are sharing limited resources, which would maximize our efforts to impact our youth. Our collaborative efforts have

already began the process in creating change not only locally and regionally in New Mexico, but at State and national levels as well. We, through ENLACE, are caring for the “WHOLE CHILD” in walking the talk of Hispanic cultural ways, values and including families as part of the educational structure of institutions.

Our focus deals with K-16 education, policy analysis revision and reform;

Leadership development at student, family, community, and institutional levels;

Enhance the statewide effectiveness of communication and dissemination throughout the K-16 pipeline focused on sharing and refining “best practices” and;

Close coordination of process and outcome evaluation on three levels, cluster, statewide, local projects, and to improve educational outcomes for all New Mexico Hispanics.

New Mexico is the only statewide collaboration nationwide and was chosen due to our state’s vision and thinking outside the box. Many Hispanic children and families would not have access to ENLACE, via funding without great people in our State who had a vision.

Statewide, all projects have three distinct yet interlocking programs to reach our goals and fall in line with President Bush’s Executive Order 13230, in the development of an advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, to address such concerns. The development of ENLACE came before the President’s Executive Order.

Programs to reach our goals and assist in a positive effect on Hispanic dropouts in our State are being accomplished via the following components.

Education Access Rooms (EAR’s) are being utilized as extensions to our local schools in local community centers, where students receive much needed credits. Education Access Rooms use distance-learning resources, tutors, and parent involvement. We target 9th and 10th grade students at risk of dropping out. These centers work closely with these students’ families.

Family centers are currently located at three high schools and we are in the process of development of these centers at each high school across the State. These centers were the brainchild of grassroots community activists Maria Hines and Christina Chavez-Apodaca. They provide a multitude of services. But mostly, they empower families in the school’s surrounding community to have a voice in the education of their children, at the same time as providing a unique place where families can come and share their concerns about our schools, one-on-one, with other parents. The Family Centers also have a strong relationship with bringing students who have dropped out back to school. Parents receive lists of students who are considered dropouts from the principal and/or are not attending classes. These parents then go door to door, within the community, speaking to students and parents on these lists, asking them why their students are not in school and how they can assist in getting the students back in school. Our parents call these “knock and talks.” A significant number of students who have dropped out have returned back to school because of these efforts.

Parent Universities are helping parents become strong advocates and coaches for their children.

ENLACE has a variety of retention components within the grant, and the retention efforts stem from K-16. Our students have mentors at all levels, support on campuses through course development such as: Chicano Studies classes, outside course work at the neighboring community centers, one-on-one support to assist with professors, financial aid, and leadership to assist in tackling the bureaucratic systems.

In order to address the needs of Hispanic students throughout our educational pipeline, we have targeted key points of the educational systems to intervene and assist students. Beginning in the middle schools, mentors are provided for at-risk students. In the high schools, Family Centers/Parent Universities will assist the schools and families to connect to better serve students. Chicano Studies courses and Latino literature at all ENLACE target high schools will provide culturally relevant teaching and empower Hispanic students to excel in their studies. AVIDS courses have also been added. At our institutions of higher education throughout the State Early Warning Intervention systems are in place to assist incoming freshmen maneuver through the educational system and succeed.

A very unique component in which university students participate in mentoring “at risk” middle school students provides one-on-one relationship building, provides a supportive environment for students to obtain academic success, make a unique connection, encourage leadership, and provides support for these students to stay in school.

Over 1500 students from across New Mexico have received support from ENLACE.

As we know, the success of student retention greatly depends on good teaching and teachers. Therefore, we have developed the Hispanic Teacher Pipeline to increase the teacher pool in New Mexico and provide opportunities within the pipeline for Hispanics young and old to obtain a higher degree in the field of teaching.

In an effort to ensure that our teacher population reflects the cultural wealth and diversity of New Mexico, Hispanic students will be exposed to teaching as a career as early as elementary school and on through college. The Pathways to Teaching program will encourage local Hispanic students to pursue teaching by providing them with shadowing experiences, workshops, and scholarship assistance. Additionally, educational assistants are encouraged to finish their degrees to return to work in New Mexico.

As we know, in order to make systematic changes for Hispanics in the State of New Mexico, we need to have data both qualitative and quantitative that show how the effects of the ENLACE movement are in creating better more productive citizens in the State of New Mexico. This is a strong component, and these results will be shared with the main stakeholders in New Mexico as we progress to fight for legislative and national policy issues for Hispanics in our State as well as in the Nation.

Given the mission of promoting greater access to higher education, retention, and graduation from higher educational institutions for Latino/Hispanic youth, ENLACE is organized to address

policy at the institutional, local, State and Federal levels. To achieve this, the ENLACE initiative identifies the institutional practices of barriers that interfere with student recruitment achievement, retention and graduation. In addition, we are addressing local school district policies that can facilitate the goals of the ENLACE initiative. We are working with local partnerships as catalysts for surfacing and informing State policymakers as they grapple with budget and policy priorities. We are informing State policymakers at the State level, where much of the education policies are generated. The collective lessons learned from the 13 ENLACE sites nationwide will be instrumental as the initiative collaborates with other national entities to inform both the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, as it relates to unique and specific needs of Latino/Hispanic students, and the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We are providing services and support to students within the K-16 educational system. ENLACE is the first initiative with a national impact and will have documented results about how to support the educational success of Latino/Hispanic students nationwide.

This Nation is in a crisis in reference to Hispanic/Latino education, and it has a direct impact on our future economic health. Therefore, financial and legislative support nationally is greatly needed to sustain the efforts ENLACE has made in retaining dropout students and moving them on to higher education. We applaud the Kellogg Foundation for their initiative to address dropout's retention and access to higher education for Latino youth. We look forward to work with the Federal Government to increase educational access for Latinos.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sanchez-Griego may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. Mr. Hall, go right ahead.

Mr. HALL. Thank you for this opportunity. My name is McClellan Hall. I am the founder and executive director of the National Indian Youth Leadership Project.

Senator BINGAMAN. You might pull that microphone a little closer so everyone in the audience can hear you. Mr. Hall. My name is McClellan Hall. I am the founder and executive director of the National Indian Youth Leadership Project. It is a national nonprofit. It is based in Gallup. I've been an educator for over 25 years now. And—

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me ask you, do we have a copy of your testimony?

Mr. HALL. Yes. I had some difficulties yesterday, but I have a copy here. I am going to try to summarize.

Senator BINGAMAN. Go ahead, please.

Mr. HALL. OK. The National Indian Youth Leadership Project is a nonprofit youth development organization that's been working with young people for over 20 years. Our work is based on a coherent set of principles, devised to help young people develop skills and competencies to become capable individuals. Although we have been funded by various Federal and State agencies to do "prevention," whether it is specifically targeted toward alcohol and tobacco and other drugs, dropout and other perceived deficits, our programs all include the same basic components of outdoor adventure, service

and service learning combined with a strong cultural awareness component.

Our approaches, although they are primarily targeted to Native American youth, have been used with mixed populations in various venues have been successful in building resiliency, self-confidence and self-efficacy.

In 2002, we are recognized by the Center for Substance Abuse, with the Exemplary Program Award for Project Venture approach. This program is typical of all NIYLP programs. In our approach to prevention, we never call our programs “prevention programs” and we don’t directly talk about the topic that we are working to prevent. Project Venture focuses on positive alternative activities, which engage young people in many roles in the community, encourage participants to stretch beyond their self-imposed limitations, and develop skills and foster resiliency.

Our evaluation data places us among the top four or five programs in a recent national cross-segment evaluation study conducted by CSAP. In addition, we were found to be the most effective program, of all those studied, that were serving Native populations. As a result of our national recognition, we now have nearly 20 replication sites across the United States, and eight of those are here in New Mexico.

One of our most powerful outcomes in our evaluation data is school bonding, so the relevance here should be clear. We work closely with the schools to recruit young people and work in the schools, and we have had a seven-year partnership with the Gallup McKinley schools, which has been challenging, to say the least. Our alternative school programs, public, tribal and BIA schools, as well as other programs, also offer accessibility to a number of young people to our programs. However, we recognize that large numbers of disaffected young people leave school before graduation for many of the same reasons that are cited, for involvement in alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse.

In our experience, going back nearly 20 years, a number of factors influenced the relationships that young people from so-called minority groups have at those schools. I am going to skip around here a little bit. In Native communities, which have the highest dropout rates in New Mexico, as well as nationally, when I was the director of the Alternative School Program for the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, our dropout rate was 70 percent of the public schools in Northeastern Oklahoma. And when I came out to the Navajo reservation about 20 years ago, I found that it is not a lot different. And it is really difficult to document and get actual data on this, because the Gallup McKinley schools cannot even provide what their dropout rate is for Native kids.

Anyway, we have noticed some trends and can offer some recommendations and strategies that will increase the probability that young people will complete high school. I have included some things here that schools could do immediately to affect the dropout rate. And the first one I suggested was service-learning programs. Student-driven projects where communities needs are researched, assessed and projects applied with extensive student input are a proven effective way of engaging young people in issues that are meaningful to them, and get them to invest themselves in the com-

munity. Youth voice should not be seen as optional or irrelevant. Quality service-learning opportunities have strong connections to the academic curriculum and support the culture and the community. Intergenerational projects which link youth and elders have great potential for authentic learning opportunities, as well as building connections to the culture and the community. Conversely, alienation is seen as a major factor in youth violence, vandalism and general apathy in our communities.

I wanted to comment that Senator Wellstone recently introduced a request to Congress for supplemental funding for teacher training around service-learning, and I don't know what the status of that is, but I wrote a support letter for that.

Another suggestion that I included was quality after-school programs. One trend that some people in our communities have observed is schools have increasingly become more like the prison industry, even adopting some of the same vocabulary, attitudes and architecture. Pressures to raise standardized test scores have eliminated many of the little things that schools could do, and have done, to make young people feel comfortable. Economic realities have eliminated many of the courses, arts, music and other, that young people used to enjoy as electives. Other extracurricular activities have been limited or curtailed due to budget constraints. Budget cuts often limit the transportation options, which affect after-school possibilities. In many rural areas, communities simply cannot afford to run extra buses.

Many teachers are overworked and underappreciated, and often cannot take on one more program. However, after-school programs are the only time that teachers and students in need of help can find the time to try the alternative approaches and have more one-on-one opportunities. The daily routine, for most teachers, does not allow individual attention. A quality after-school program could make the difference between success and failure. In many cases, the perception is that students are blamed for the failures of the school system. And the teachers assume a punitive attitude toward so-called minority group students, Especially where Native youth who come to school speaking a language other than English are perceived to be holding the school back in terms of test scores, reading levels, etc.

Another component of our programs, Adventure Programs, Re-connecting with the Natural World. Among other things, our programs have been very successful in what evaluators call "school bonding," which includes improved attendance, reduced disciplinary incidents, improved grades and increased involvement in school-related activities. In our experience, young people have a different perception of school when they have shared experiences with teachers outside the classroom walls. The natural world provides contacts, for activities that challenge young people to stretch beyond self-imposed limitations.

So I have a couple others here that I have listed that were not in the original document. Partnerships between schools and community-based organizations can be an effective way to approach the dropout problem; alternative school programs, obviously, we need more of those, and special programs, such as the one described in the first presentation, where a one-on-one case management ap-

proach is taken. But if it is only going to be a one- or two-year grant to do such a program, then I question how we can sustain that. It's raising expectations that may not be able to continue.

The Conceptional Foundations of our approach is what I have listed here. Our programs are holistic, incorporating physical, cognitive, physiological and spiritual development. They are experiential, they involve learning by doing. They are structured risk and challenge connected to the natural world; student and youth centered; developmentally appropriate; culturally relevant; focus on building life skills and relationships. There is high coherence and intensity of interventions.

I am going to skip over a couple of the sections here, but the summary of major findings from the cross-site evaluation study and prevention programs I think is really interesting. This was done by Dr. Fred Springer of EMT Associates. As youth age, levels of risk and protection shift considerably. The findings on risk, protection and substance abuse and the age of youth reveals a consistent pattern. As young people move through the adolescent years, there is a steady movement away from the protective factors toward the risk conditions in most of the factors. The movement is greater in family bonding, school bonding, and peer attitudes of those factors that refer to the social environments to which young people build attachments as they mature. In my assessment, this means that as young people move through the adolescent years, family and school become less influential, and the peer group becomes stronger.

This presents a challenge to schools to be aware that they need to do more to attract and bond with young people. However, the trend with schools, in our experience, seems to be to toughen policies and become less flexible at this critical juncture. Gender also plays an important role in risk protection and substance use. Generally, the summary here is that young men need to be bonding with positive influences at this critical age, yet most of the accessible role models seem to be fairly negative, according to the media, music, etc.

Connectiveness, again, is the major protective factor against substance abuse. Positive behavioral outcomes among young people reflect a tight interweaving of external and internal protective factors. Connectiveness to family and schools forms the core of this protection. Meaningful involvement is the key to connectiveness. Schools cannot—the school environment can serve as a powerful protective factor against substance abuse, and will increase the likelihood of staying in school, if the school is providing a positive environment.

The schools have to welcome young people and provide a nurturing environment. In reality, youth perceives schools to be increasingly rigid and inflexible. In our conversations with Dr. Fred Springer, the most important factor that he found, in extensive analysis of prevention programs across the country, was the concept of connectiveness. And this seems to be the single factor that comes through in reading through the study. The efforts that were successful in preventing alcohol, substance abuse, dropout, etc, had the concept of connectiveness in common.

I would just summarize by suggesting that we have a perfectly designed system that is currently giving us the results that we are currently getting. The only way we can really improve schools is to make education a true priority, and the President's budget and his logic doesn't necessarily reflect that, in my opinion. I really feel that we have to make education a priority and put our money where our mouth is. And I appreciate your efforts to do that. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hall may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. Thanks to all of you for your excellent testimony. Let me ask a few questions that occur to me here as we start the discussion. It strikes me that there is a lot of disagreement and misunderstanding, when we start citing statistics, about the extent of the dropout problem. And let me give you my simplistic view of it, then, Dr. Meurer, maybe you can explain your more sophisticated view.

There are sort of three ways you can look at these statistics. One is the question of how many students drop out each year. A second statistic, of course, or a second way to look at it is, how many students drop out during the period between the 9th and the 12th grade. During those 4 years, a percent of those students leave school. And then a third, maybe even more inclusive, in the sense that it is, of all the students begin school, how many of them finish. And I gather when McClellan Hall talks about 70 percent of Native Americans are dropping out, he's talking about that last category. He is saying that 70 percent of the kids who start school, 70 percent of the Native American kids who start school do not complete high school.

The statistics you have given us, I believe those are on an annual basis, is that correct, Dr. Meurer? You said 5.3 percent. Maybe you can clarify that. Could you hand that microphone over to her so she could be heard by everyone in the back of the room, too?

Ms. MEURER. Senator Bingaman, the way that New Mexico now looks at dropout is to follow the National Center for Educational Statistics. And now there are 37 States that are looking at it that way. There has been a lot of confusion, as you said, in the past, about how dropout statistics are calculated. And the definition and methodology that NCES uses has to do with looking at students that not only have dropped out during that year, but it is waiting till the next year and have not re-enrolled. And that is where the dropout comes in. So we are waiting until October before we actually collect the data from the year before to see who has not re-enrolled.

There is also another kind of catch that is done, and there are two data systems that are used in New Mexico. One is our Ag system, and to look at whether or not, because sometimes schools don't know, that student actually moved to another district and re-enrolled. And if they did, then they would not be considered a dropout statistic. Sometimes school districts are not aware that students have moved and re-enrolled in another school district, so we do a catch.

The other thing NCES does is look at the U.S. census data, which is another form of looking at dropout prevention. And that

is actually done on a two-year basis. And they look at census data and they ask, basically, of adults 18 to 24 who are not currently enrolled in school, have they received either high school diploma or a GED. And if they say no to those, then they are considered part of that national dropout statistic of looking at it that way. And when you look at those statistics, they are really looking for retention, and the statistics are improving in New Mexico for that, too.

They look at a two-year timeframe. In 1994 through 1996 we had 78.8 percent of those individuals saying they had completed school or received a GED. In 1998-2000 it went up to 83 percent. So our numbers are improving, regardless of how you define those. But that is a confusion. They are defined differently. Right now only 37 States are using the NCES definition, so it does make comparisons, nationally, a bit confusing. Because if they use a different methodology or definition, then they are not necessarily comparable data. But we have adopted that. In 1992, New Mexico went to that. So from 1992 to present, we have very consistent data with a very consistent methodology at how we look at dropouts in New Mexico.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me just try to be sure I understand what is meant when we say our dropout rate in the years 2000 and 2001 was 5.3 percent. What we are saying is that, that at that rate, if we are able to keep it at that rate, then over a four-year high school, we would have over 21 percent of the students leave that high school? So you would multiply that by four? Is that right or—

Ms. MEURER. No. That is looking at the graphs that I gave you, the charts actually do break it down between 9th and 12th grade, and then the dropout rates for 7th and 8th grade. So they are looked at two different ways. When you look at that, you are talking about the school year. When it says 2000-2001, it is the school year of 2000-2001.

Senator BINGAMAN. So we lost over 5 percent of the students in that school year?

Ms. MEURER. That is correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. So in trying to figure out how many students to get—trying to get back to what McClellan was referring to, we don't have a good way of determining how many students had dropped out the previous year and stayed out, so we are not able to sort of look and say how many students overall that are supposed to be moving through the school system and toward a graduation date, are not doing so?

Ms. MEURER. Well, we can begin to look at reenrollment data for that, to see if they come back into the system. But that is what we are looking at from the previous school year. But we can look at reenrollment data. And I can give you an example of what those percentages represent. In 1994-1995, we are at the rate of 8.7 percent. That represents 7,792 students in New Mexico. In the 2000-2001 school year, it represents 5,095 students. So we basically kept 2,697 students in school, that would have dropped out 7 years ago. So those are real numbers of kids. Percentages are kind of confusing because it is not real numbers. That is what we are looking at. 2,697 is not okay, but it is better than it was 7 years ago. We can begin to look at re-enrollment data, and that is taken into consider-

ation. But what you're looking at, in terms of the data that we give, is really reflective of that prior school year.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. It is my understanding there are several school districts that have been denied eligibility for Federal funding because they did not have recent dropout data. Am I right about that? Is there anything that can be done at the State level to ensure that the districts and the public have this dropout data on a more timely basis?

Ms. MEURER. The Department of Education is working on a new system to try to get the reports out in a more timely manner. Also, individual school districts do have the capability of determining their own individual dropout rate before the Department publishes the State rates. They have the same methodology and can use that data to determine their own districts. What they would not be able to do is do a comparison of other districts until the State report is ready.

We are working very diligently right now to increase that. One of the problems is that we don't collect the data until October of the next school year because of the definition of the NCES, and that, basically, is students that have not re-enrolled at that time, so it gives, actually, a more lenient definition of dropout. But we are going to be moving quicker to get those reports out. We are hoping—at this point, I said we would have the previous year's dropout rate. By December, the report will be out, and then we are hoping this spring we will have the report from last school year, instead of waiting till the fall of the next year. So we are hoping to move that up.

Senator BINGAMAN. Is this information that I have got here right, though, that some school districts in our State have been denied eligibility for Federal funds because they didn't have recent dropout data?

Ms. MEURER. I am not sure that is true or not.

Senator BINGAMAN. You do not know?

Ms. MEURER. I do not have information on that.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. Do we have anything at the State level that has been adopted not just as an initiative to try to get better data, but actually an initiative to reduce the dropout rate, where certain policies have been implemented or urged or adopted, that would apply to groups of school districts or schools?

Ms. MEURER. As I mentioned in my testimony, the State Board of Education is looking at more flexibility for schools so they can address this. The at-risk factor was one avenue the State Board went to try to provide more resources for schools. And they are also looking at several programs—there is a program where students can take courses, at high school, in the universities, and actually work toward their associate degree before they even graduate from high school. And the virtual schooling project is another project that is looking at that.

In addition, we have the pilot project that we are working on. The State Board of Education is constantly looking for ways to provide more flexibility to schools, to allow for more resources, if they can. And they are looking at regulations that they need to be readjusted or changed, or new regulations in place, in order to allow schools more flexibility. That is on the radar right now, and they

are talking about it even during this session that they are doing right now.

Senator BINGAMAN. But the main focus at the State Board level is trying to be sure that local districts have the flexibility to deal with the problem?

Ms. MEURER. That is correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. It is not mandating a certain set of actions by the local districts?

Ms. MEURER. No. The State Board truly believes in local autonomy, and feels that each individual school district and their community can determine the best programs to attack the issues within their communities. So they are looking to allow for flexibility for that to happen in the local communities and schools.

Senator BINGAMAN. Karen, let me ask you, you have been doing this, now, for a year, as I understand; is that right?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. That is correct. Just for me, 1 year.

Senator BINGAMAN. Yeah. And it may be too early to be expecting this, but you mentioned there are several strategies that you are working on to implement in the various schools that you are wanting to mention. One is the mentoring at the middle school level?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. That is correct.

Senator BINGAMAN. Could you describe a little more what that involves and how many students and how you accomplish it and who does it?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Well, currently, because there is a strong research component that follows, we have got mentoring going on in the southern part of the State and the northern part of the State and central, which is Albuquerque, and we are targeting just three middle schools and three local high schools in kind of like the feeder cluster area. And at those schools, just in particular in Albuquerque, they saw 60 students last year. And they probably added at least 30 more this year. And what they are doing is, they meet with the students one-on-one—

Senator BINGAMAN. Who's "they"?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Students from the University of New Mexico, students at New Mexico State University, High Glen and Santa Fe Community College.

Senator BINGAMAN. So they are paid?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. They are paid.

Senator BINGAMAN. These are college students who are paid to meet with kids at what grade levels?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. They started with 6th grade, last year. They are staying with the 6th graders and following them all the way up the pipeline. We are trying to keep the kids—once we get them in our pipeline in ENLACE, regardless of whether they are in the Family Center, the mentoring, Chicano Studies, wherever, but in the mentoring component, per se, they picked them up in the 6th grade last year. They are continuing on with them as 7th graders. This year they picked up some additional 6th graders from this year and they are just beginning to come into the pipeline.

Senator BINGAMAN. How often would a college student meet with this 6th or 7th grader?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. They meet with them twice a week, and then they do like an all-out program. They work with the school system to make sure that they are not getting out of academic-type programs. They are working with them. And in the afternoons they run a program called "Compas," where they do tutoring. And they are there after school, available—

Senator BINGAMAN. What is the program called?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. The whole program is Los Companeros. And then Compas is—probably was prior to that. It would be a full amount that you cut and increase one-on-one to try to get to know the kids, talk to them about staying in school. A lot of them are having family problems, so they refer back to the family. It is just a whole link of programs that the kids get service from. And then, afterwards, in the afternoons, they encourage the kids to come to this tutoring program where they bring their homework, and they actually meet with the teachers and things, and what are the things you need for us to work with this student on academically.

Senator BINGAMAN. So how long have you been doing this mentoring activity?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. We started probably in October of last year, so it is relatively been a year. The Institute for Social Research at the University of New Mexico and we have researched components at all levels. In fact, one of our researchers, Victoria, is here today. And they are studying the effects of this. They go out and they observe, they check their test scores in the Terra Nova, and whether they have increased or not increased, they check their attendance to see if their attendance has increased since they have been provided a mentor, they check discipline referrals to see if the referrals are less.

So we are following a whole number of things. We want to make sure the money that was given by Kellogg, and things, and the same thing that I do at Cibola. We are trying to follow the effects of what we are doing to be able to go to the State Department and say, These are the effects of what we have seen in a year in the State of New Mexico for Latinos. And it can be used really, relatively, for all students. Because we have such a high dropout operate, almost half the students in our State are not graduating high school. They are not even going on to college. That is our target population. But we are seeing various students along our pipeline.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me just say I think that your figures as to how many kids are dropping out are very different from the ones Dr. Meurer has.

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Absolutely.

Senator BINGAMAN. How do you explain that?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. You know what is so funny is the University of New Mexico got these figures from the State Department of Education when they wrote the grant almost 2 years ago, so it was interesting to hear that the figures were different on our end.

Senator BINGAMAN. You need to go back and check and see what the real figures are, because clearly there is a disagreement.

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Absolutely. I work as a teacher and principal, and that has always been a discrepancy in how we look at these kids. They might—no disrespect to the doctor, but part of what we see is kids coming to school, they might re-enroll. But

what happens is, they might re-enroll and continue to re-enroll, but they are not really attending class. So sometimes——

Senator BINGAMAN. So they re-enroll in October or September and dropout again?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Correct. And then they might come back and re-enroll again. That is a lot of what we were seeing. I know a lot of school districts are trying to keep the kids in programatically with other things that we are doing. They are trying to provide programs in reference to that. Again, I am not trying to speak against her. I am just saying, those are the figures that the State Department gave us when we wrote the grant. Actually, that went through the University of New Mexico's Foundation and researchers.

Senator BINGAMAN. Mr. Hall, let me ask you, you have an interesting point in your testimony where you talk about how you try not to focus on the problem, but try to focus on the positive?

Mr. HALL. Right.

Senator BINGAMAN. Which is a good idea, generally. I have read some of these motivation books which say that is the right way to approach it. And I remember a conversation I had with one of our superintendents here in the State several years ago, and I said, What are you doing about the dropout problem? And he said, We encourage attendance in our schools. Which I thought was a very interesting response. And he said, We just encourage the kids to come to school, and we emphasize it from the day they begin in kindergarten. And we emphasize it to their parents, and we never let up. If they are not in school, we will find them and bring them to school.

I don't know if that is the kind of thing you are talking about when you are basically focusing on the positive, but I wondered, many times, if we have fallen into a trap by labeling this "dropout problem," and concentrating on that instead of looking more on the positive side and saying, How do we increase attendance in our schools?

Mr. HALL. I would agree with that. I think our approach of focusing on the positive is based on traditional wisdom from a lot of elders that I have talked to over the last 30 years. Some of them never went to school at all, but that is their philosophy. They focus on the positive in every case. In the case of the dropout situations, what I tried to focus on were things that would encourage kids to continue to come to school. And I think that is a powerful approach.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me also just comment, your reference to "connectiveness" as the key element, I mean, the student feeling connected to the school, and the parents of the student feeling connected to the school, you know, "school bonding" is another phrase you use here, seems to me that that is a major idea that I think has prompted me and others to support this notion of smaller schools.

Mr. HALL. Yes.

Senator BINGAMAN. Because it is a lot easier to be connected to a school where you really know the people there, and you feel you have some familiarity with the physical surrounding, the people there, and you know what to expect when you show up in the

morning, than it is to show up at a 2500-person high school and feel like you are going to get mowed down if you get out in the hallway during the changing of classes or something.

Mr. HALL. The schools are way too big. My wife works at Gallup High School, and my son goes there. And she will never see him during the week.

Senator BINGAMAN. How big is Gallup High School?

Mr. HALL. There is close to 2000—16, 17, 1800. I don't know. And it only has 10th through 12th grade. It is a big school. That is, obviously, one of the big problems.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me ask Dr. Meurer this. Do we have any statistics as to where the dropout problem is concentrated? My impression has been that it is most severe in our largest schools. Is that accurate, or do we know, or is this just a guess?

Ms. MEURER. I would have to look at the dropout study report. And I gave you the 1999-2000 one, but it does break it down by school district in here. And I think that you are accurate. There are some smaller school districts—when we identified the pilot that I had mentioned, we looked at dropout rate as one of the indicators for determining which schools would be chosen. And it is not always the largest school districts that have—

Senator BINGAMAN. I am not talking about the size of the school district. I am talking about the size of the school.

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. The size of the school does seem to have an impact. Smaller schools tend to have more connectiveness. I know that is showing in studies. And one-on-one with the teachers is a lot easier than in the larger schools. And kids feel that they belong there. So we do see that school size does have some impact on dropout.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me also ask if there is any—Dr. Meurer, in your testimony, you refer to the Early Reading Program, which I think is also a priority of the State Board. I believe I am right about that?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Yeah, reading first.

Senator BINGAMAN. I have always assumed, and I guess everyone assumes that if a kid learns to read in the first two or 3 years of school, that that dramatically reduces the likelihood that that student will fail and drop out of school later on. Do we really know that? I mean, do we know that the problem of kids leaving school is correlated pretty directly to kids who haven't mastered basic reading skills, or is that just guessing?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. There are some studies that do show some correlations between reading and dropout, but I would put a causal on it. There are many, many reasons why students drop out of school. And not feeling that they can keep up is one reason, and reading has a strong impact on that. There are several reasons why kids drop out of school. Some are social reasons. And that is what that one pilot that I talked about is really kind of looking at with the case management. It is a very expensive model, but it really does take each individual student that is at risk of dropping out and figuring out what are the risk factors and addressing those specifically. It may be reading, it may be that they have to be the breadwinner for the family. It may be poverty. It could be a number of things and combinations of those. I don't think we can say

there is one reason why students drop out of school. And so the Reading First is just one initiative to try to address one thing that we do know, through research, is connected to dropout.

Senator BINGAMAN. I am sure you are right. There are a whole range of causes. But I think what is useful, at least it seems to me, what is useful to our State, and for us nationally, is to identify those kinds of structural changes that we can make in our school system that will, by and large, increase the likelihood that kids will stay in school and graduate and do well. And some of those are being sure that there is a very strong effort at teaching reading in the early grades; trying to ensure that the schools are not too large, that there are smaller schools. Those are two fairly obvious things that I think would reduce the likelihood of kids leaving school. There are probably four or five others, and if you have ideas, I would be interested in hearing them.

Ms. MEURER. Just to throw one out, I think it has to do with the size of the school, but it also has to do with the size the classroom. The more students a teacher has each period, that they are addressing, the less they have one-on-one attention with students. And I think my colleague at the end of the table could probably concur that connectiveness to school, some of the studies show that has to do with a significant adult in their life, and that school, the mentoring program, the success of the mentoring program in providing those mentors for kids. So class sizes and—

Senator BINGAMAN. School size and class size both?

Ms. MEURER. Can help, I think. Connectiveness is a real key factor. And things that can be changed within the school and community environment to provide that are critical issues.

Senator BINGAMAN. Anybody have a third or fourth or fifth?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. The Family Centers that are being developed by ENLACE, these are centers that are now—in younger ages, you have PTA and parents that are active in the schools. As students get older, parents become less active. And one of the things that Maria Hines, who is in the audience, one of our parents who is kind of the founder of these Family Centers in New Mexico, they are developing centers at the high schools. These centers are run by parents. They are not people that are hired by the school district. They are run by parents who actually live in the community. They are out there.

This center is a place where kids can feel connected. They can come to these centers which provide just an open environment, a one-on-one connection. One is in Albuquerque, and they are going to be placed in Las Cruces, shortly. In working with the director, Lisa Sanchez, is bringing together — they keep food in their facility, constantly, that ENLACE has paid for. Kids can come in and just grab a snack, talk to them about what is going on. A lot of times they intervene with the teacher. And it is a parent to a parent. They talk with other parents.

And, again, I think the success that we have seen in a year's amount of time is—and they have been very instrumental to bringing dropout students back, because they actually go out into the community and talk to other family members. These were very, initially, hard to establish because of the fact that you are not the principal, so we have our territory. We were like, What do you

mean they are not an employee of the district? This is their school. They are coming in to help assist you with students on your campus that maybe you cannot get to, or your counselor cannot get to, or the teacher cannot reach. So there is a partnership right now.

That is some that, in fact, we presented nationwide. We presented at a conference in Chicago. Our parents have just been selected to present the national PTA in Charlotte, North Carolina in reference to Family Centers. So I think that is a——

Senator BINGAMAN. How many of these Family Centers do we have now?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Currently, we have three.

Senator BINGAMAN. At which schools?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. They are at Albuquerque High, West Mesa High School, and Del Norte High School.

Senator BINGAMAN. How long have you had them in place?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. Same amount of time, about 8 months. We are going to be presenting to the Legislative Education Committee in reference to this. The director up in the southern, who works on policy, is actually working with the ad hoc committee to write some legislation——

Senator BINGAMAN. Do they provide some specific services in addition to giving the kids snacks?

Ms. SANCHEZ-GRIEGO. They provide services such as they bring in tutors from the university, they bring in mentors. And the parent is here. She could probably tell it a little bit better than I because she is there day to day.

They have dealt with students who have had suicide situations. What they do, they are working with the school. So the student might come in and say, I have got a friend, and she is having trouble. And then what happens is, they go to the counseling office, say, They have come to us first. We want your help, but we are also working with the family.

They helped a young man who was not going to graduate last year. The parents were monolingual Spanish speakers and did not feel comfortable going to the school. So they directly went to the family center and talked to the parents, initially. They have helped runaways. They found out that a student had been a runaway, from a friend of the friend. They deal with a multitude of problems. And again, I probably am not saying as best as my parent, who is in the audience, could do.

Senator BINGAMAN. That sounds like a very interesting idea.

Yes? We have someone from the audience who wants to speak up.

Ms. Patterson. I would just like to say, to add——

Senator BINGAMAN. Tell us your name, again, please.

Ms. Patterson. I am coordinating the PASS project, the pilot project. I would just like to add, to the four or five services that might directly help students are school-based mental health services or school-based health clinics where mental health services help students, and perhaps family counseling type situations. I think we are seeing more and more students who have substance abuse issues at younger ages, or serious mental health issues, and school-based services can really help them.

Senator BINGAMAN. Very good. This has been very useful, and we have another excellent panel coming forward with, I am sure, some additional great insights. Thank you all very much for being here. I appreciate it.

Why don't we go ahead with the second panel? And let me see Stan Rounds, who is the superintendent of Hobbs Public Schools. And we have Dr. Haugen, who is the superintendent at Gadsden; is that correct?

Mr. HAUGEN. Yes.

Senator BINGAMAN. And Everette Hill, who is the coordinator of the dropout project for YDI, the Youth Development Industry, Incorporated. And do we have Beverly Averitt, also? Beverly, are you going to be on our panel, or not?

Ms. AVERITT. Am I? Yes.

Senator BINGAMAN. We would love to have you up here. Let us get another chair. Beverly is a principal at Espanola High School. Let me just do a slight introduction of each of these individuals. Dr. Rounds, Stan Rounds, the superintendent of Hobbs Public Schools, has led the effort there to implement the advanced placement and preadvanced placement programs, and a variety of other initiatives that have been very successful, and has been successful. And I have had the good fortune to meet with him and others in that community, and admired their success over several years now.

Ron Haugen is with Gadsden schools. And as I indicated earlier, they did receive a dropout intervention grant, which, unfortunately, I don't believe the funding was continued the following year, so I would be anxious to know what progress you were able to make.

Everette Hill is with YDI, which is well known in our State for the good work that they do. And as I mentioned, Beverly Averitt, who is the principal at Espanola High School.

So thank you. Why don't we just start with Stan and go right across? And each of, you let me just say that we will include your whole statement in the record. If you could just summarize, make the main points that you think that I ought to be aware of, I would sure appreciate that, and then we will have some questions.

Stan, thank you for coming.

STATEMENT OF STAN ROUNDS, SUPERINTENDENT FOR HOBBS SCHOOLS; RON HAUGEN, SUPERINTENDENT, GADSDEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS; EVERETTE HILL, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INC., ALBUQUERQUE; BEVERLY AVERITT, ESPANOLA HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Mr. ROUNDS. Good morning, Senator. I want to express my appreciation, first of all, to Senator Bingaman for your foresight in bringing this hearing to southern New Mexico. I know that is unusual as far as Congressional hearings. We are certainly honored to have you here today. I would also like to thank you for your leadership in the Advanced Placement Program, both at the National and State level. You certainly are a friend to education in that respect. And I am delighted, today, that we are able to sit here and have an opportunity to discuss a very important issue of student dropouts.

When it comes to dropout statistics odds, the numbers speak for themselves. The percentage of kids who drop out of Hobbs High

School before graduation dipped from 3.4 percent in 1995-1996 to approximately 1 percent in this last school year of 2001-2002. As we heard earlier, that compares with a statewide average, I believe the number was 5.3 percent. During that same timespan, Senator, the percentage of children who entered the Hobbs kindergarten class grew, and then graduated 12 years later, jumped from 45.3 percent to 87 percent. We are quite proud of that move.

Though putting a face on the numbers might be the easier approach for us today. That is why I will start with Jake Loflin. Last year at this time, Jake was a Hobbs 9th grader headed for trouble, in school and out. He was a drug user who had anger issues and was a discipline problem. Jake faced long-term suspension and was on the brink of leaving school for good. However, he also had the option of enrolling in the TARS program, a boot-camp style class that is a combination of calisthenics, crew cuts and tough love. After spending 16 weeks in the program, that requires students to curb their attitude and temper, Loflin, with other spit-and-polished classmates in uniform, marched in front of the Hobbs School Board last Tuesday night and collected his TARS diploma.

Hobbs Mayor Bobby Wallach showed up too, because he wanted to give Jake a heroism award for helping save the lives of an El Paso family whose boat flipped over at Brantley Lake this summer. His mom said that she didn't think that he would have had the forethought to strap on a lifejacket and jump in and help those people if it were not for TARS, for the discipline he had learned there.

Instead of being at risk for dropping out of school, I am proud to tell you, Senator, that Jake is now making As and Bs and has his sights set on college.

I would also like to talk to you about Natalie Rios. Only 17, Natalie easily could have become part of the 68 percent of teenage mothers nationally who fail to complete high school. Instead, she enrolled last year in the newly formed teen parenting class in Hobbs High School, and learned how to care for her son, who is about 2 years old. The class features a teacher who makes home visits, and a curriculum that covers everything from the ABCs of giving birth to courtroom tactics for securing child support payment.

Now, we are certainly not thrilled about the rising epidemic of teenage pregnancy, we choose not to bury our head in the sand about this national epidemic. To be honest, however, not everybody is pleased with the innovative programs that are offered by the Hobbs schools. If you ask the 39-year-old mother who, this summer, became the first person found guilty of violating the compulsory school attendance law in Hobbs, she probably wouldn't be too happy with us. But her four children are in school today, thanks largely to an aggressive attendance policy that saw Hobbs hire four truancy prevention specialists. Charged with going to the homes of students with chronic absences, truancy officers, two of them were bilingual, provided one-on-one contact to parents, who, oftentimes, are too intimidated to visit their children's schools.

You see, providing a united front helps, so much so that the absence rates at all levels has been reduced by almost one-half in just the first year of the truancy program's existence. In the rare cases

where parents refused to take the responsibility for getting their children to school, the long arm of the law is the last resort.

And the guilty verdict rendered by the judge got the woman's attention, as well as other parents in the community, whom we have decided to hold responsible for their children's behavior.

Here is another for you. Michael Ware was only 17 when he graduated from Hobbs High School 2 years ago, but already had 42 college credits when he enrolled at Colorado State University a couple of months later. Ware took advantage of the Advanced Placement Program that other schools districts in the State are now emulating. While Michael was clearly never at risk for dropping out of school, here is what makes our AP program so innovative.

It targets more than overachievers in its academic net. More than 40 percent of the students from Hobbs, largely a blue-collar town, that now has a 51 percent majority of Hispanic students, of which, Senator, about one-half are ELL, or limited English proficient students, take at least one AP or pre-AP class last year. Our goal is to exceed 70 percent.

The AP program attracts an abundance of students to its classes because it offers financial reward. Make a 3, 4 or 5 on your AP exam, and you earn a paycheck as well as college credit. Get high enough scores and you take home a \$2,000 computer.

With that, an aggressive student mentoring effort is a key element, we believe, to the success of that program. You see, the AP classes are not limited just to the high school. Pre-advanced placement curriculum in the junior high, and CORE knowledge, which is a cultural literacy curriculum at the elementary school, means our students will be even better prepared for tough classes when they encounter them.

Our research also shows that thematic instructions embodied by CORE improves the learning and test scores of bilingual kids. An important project you might want to look at, Senator, is the San Antonio schools in San Antonio, Texas.

By choosing to set the bar higher, Hobbs has succeeded in raising the academic standards for all students, even those who don't enroll in AP classes. Of course, not all kids go the AP route. Plenty of students are enrolled in vocational programs that take advantage of nearby New Mexico Junior College. More than a hundred students get on a bus each day at Hobbs High and ride to the community college campus, where they are enrolled in classes like auto mechanics, cosmetology. Computer-assisted drafting or metal working are also examples of the skills they can learn with equipment that the Hobbs school system has purchased and placed on that campus.

They can take advantage of a newly outfitted technology lab, a \$250,000 facility that opened this semester to high schools, or a \$300,000 lab at the freshman school. It is no secret that conducting experiments in a simulated wind tunnel, or being the director of your own digital movie appeals to students who are not pen-and-pencil types. And it is no secret that continually updating technology labs is what it takes to make the high school relevant to today's students.

Hobbs voters recently passed a bond issue which would keep our schools current with this century's technology, \$22.3 million. In ad-

dition to cutting-edge computers, the Hobbs school offers a Career Technology Education Plan, which turns out students with skills that allow them to get an entry-level job anywhere in the business world, upon graduation. Again, Senator, relevancy to the student.

It is a simple fact of life, however, that some kids do not feel comfortable in the standard classroom. Recognizing that nontraditional students are those most at risk of dropping out, Hobbs schools offers a number of individually tailored education plans. They include an alternative school where students work at their own pace. See, these are not bad kids. They are kids we are losing, kids that have special needs, kids that have children of their own or problems at home.

Enrollment at the alternate school has increased from about 25 students a decade ago to more than 110 now. Night school has also increased its enrollment at roughly the same pace, as has summer school.

The fact that Hobbs High School closed its campus in 1993, meaning that hundreds of students were not making the run for the Taco Bell border at lunchtime each day also has helped. See, kids now stay on campus and problems don't come on to campus.

There is no one reason we can point to that accounts for a dropout rate that has been on the decline for 7 years running. Instead, we have incorporated a mosaic of programs to make school relevant, while raising the bar of education for today's learners, learners who include everybody from unwed mothers to teens who are capable of saving lives but might need some direction. See, each student matters to us. And, Senator, as you voted, no child should be left behind.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rounds may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much. That is excellent testimony. And again, congratulations on many of the projects and programs that you are implementing there. I am very impressed with them.

Mr. Haugen, why don't you go right ahead and give us the perspective from Gadsden? I know you have a very challenging situation there with a very fast-growing school district.

Mr. HAUGEN. Thank you, Senator Bingaman. First of all, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide some information to the Senate Health, Education and Pension Committee regarding the dropout prevention programs that are currently in operation or in need in the Gadsden Independent School District. The programs that we have are currently focused on the upper elementary, middle school and high school students, due to the urgency in improving the academic skill level of these students to enhance their future opportunities for success.

The Gadsden Independent School District has implemented the following programs: First we have the Desert Pride Academy. This is an alternative school that consists of, basically, two programs. We have a credit recovery program for students who are off grade level—

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me just interrupt a second. Do I have a copy of this testimony? I just don't see it. OK, thanks. Go right ahead. Sorry.

Mr. HAUGEN. Like I said, these students have two groups. First are those that are off, in terms of their grade level, and it is mainly a credit recovery program. The other group of students are there for long-term student disciplinary reasons. This is primarily students grades 9 through 12, and it is supported solely by district operational funds.

The second program is the Title I reading and math labs. These are academic support labs for incoming 9th grade students who are basically identified as at risk for dropping out. These students, in lieu of being retained in the 8th grade, are promoted to the 9th grade and placed in these special classes for reading and mathematic assistance to support their additional language arts and reading classes, math classes that they would have in high school.

These students are basically identified as being in the bottom quartile, over time, in the States norm-referenced testing system. And these laboratory courses are solely supported by Title I funds.

Our most recent experience in this school district, with resources and opportunities for dropout prevention, is a pilot partnership with New Mexico State University, and funded by the U.S. Department of Education, as you mentioned, entitled the Dropout Prevention Demonstration program. This pilot program allows us to work with students in grades 6 through 9 that are identified as at risk of dropping out. This is basically a literacy program for older students to focus on improving literacy skills by providing in-school and after-school services.

After 1 year of funding, the U.S. Department of Education did not fund this project, even though an application was submitted for three additional years. The weaknesses as referenced in the application, or by the reviewers of the application, indicated that the program focused on literacy skills and not dropout prevention. We strongly disagree with these assumptions that literacy is not the underlying factor that leads to students dropping out.

As a district and as a community of educators, we believe this is the primary cause that leads students to the point of making the decision to leave school. The dropout situation is generally not created by a single incident, but more often by a series of incidences, most of which are related to years and years of frustration and lack of success on the part of the student. The lack of literacy skills to function effectively and competitively with their peers is important early in a student's education. We believe it could have made a difference in the middle years of school had this project been funded in the future.

We believe that the long-term strategy for dropout prevention in border communities lies in having the ability to work with children prior to their official entry into the public school system, such as the Gadsden Independent School District, and not in remediating students late in their educational career.

We propose that moneys be focused on early childhood literacy programs for 3- and 4-year-olds. This is needed in a district such as Gadsden that has a low socioeconomic status. Each year we enter about 1,000 students into our kindergarten programs. Approximately 850 of those students are monolingual Spanish-speaking students.

The District has found that these students enter kindergarten two to 3 years behind their peers. The moneys needed for this type of literacy program will provide the necessary developmental opportunities that are prevalent in communities that have a higher socioeconomic status. Equity of opportunity could be achieved by access to this type of a structure that would allow the children in the Gadsden district to acquire English language skills, leading to earlier proficiency.

To equalize the playing field, we believe it is imperative that Districts such as ours be afforded the resources and opportunity to provide early literacy programs for 3- and 4-year-old students.

We believe that a funding structure is needed to support early literacy and struggling reader programs that will address No Child Left Behind. Reading is a fundamental right of all people in this country.

Yesterday I read an article out of the National School Board Association—their monthly publication, and the article was entitled “Poor Kindergartners Lack Basic Skills.” And, just briefly, it said that children from poor families start kindergarten at a tremendous disadvantage. They are way behind other children in their cognitive skills, they need to learn math, reading and other skills, which is concluded by the Economic Policy Institute. This is research that was done by people out of the University of Michigan. And the title of the research was “Inequality of the Starting Date.”

And we believe that is so important in our district. We have kids that come in. They are fundamentally behind their peers. And with the No Child Left Behind, we have a mandate to get them to a certain point by the time they reach the 3rd grade. I think we have these children that—a large number of children who actually have acquired the language skills to be competitive with their peers, this puts them at a disadvantage. We believe if we can get these children prior to that point and help remediate some of the situations, that maybe the family has not been able to afford them, we can probably help the dropout cause in the long-run. This is a long-term solution rather than the Band-Aids that are normally applied to students later on in their careers. Thank you.

[The prepared statement by Mr. Haugen may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. All right. Thank you very much for your excellent testimony.

Mr. Hill, you are here to represent the YDI and give us some insights as to the work you folks do. And I am glad to have you.

Mr. HILL. Yes, sir. Thank you very much. First, let me say thank you for the opportunity to be here. I must send along some apologies for Chris Baca, our President and CEO, who is out of town on some other previous commitments.

My name is Everette Hill. I am the vice president of the Education Employment Training Division for Youth Development Incorporated. We have heard, this morning, some wonderful testimony about not only successful programs, but also strategies that work in dealing with youth at risk of dropping out. Two of the projects that we operate, the Project Succeed Program, and the Project Achieve Program—Project Succeed is a program that runs out of the high schools, and Achieve is a program that works in the

middle schools. And those programs work competitively to provide services for youth throughout that spectrum. You actually highlight this in the "New Mexico Dropout Prevention Handbook."

Those programs have received numerous awards for their effectiveness, the ability to retain students. In fact, Project Succeed, over the course of its life since 1986, has retained about 88 percent of the students it's worked with, and I think we are somewhere in the neighborhood of 15,000 to 18,000 students over that time period. There are some things that we know about dropout prevention. Many of the panelists earlier spoke to some of those things.

We found, in operating these programs since their inception, that smaller class sizes makes a difference. Not only smaller class sizes, but individualized instruction, modalities in terms of how instruction is delivered, case management outside the classroom, job development for not only students, but sometimes their parents, being able to affect the system from which a student at risk might come from, because they, inevitably, have to return to that system, and what skills they return with.

So we have known that there are some things that really work, and many of these programs incorporate those things that work. In my written testimony I tried to speak to what I believe is the challenge that lies before us.

The question for me really is, how do we sustain the progress that we have made? We heard testimony earlier that the dropout rate has been on the decline for the last seven to 10 years. Although some of the numbers—there may be discrepancy in the actual numbers, I think that is a truism, that these programs that are working with young people, are working. They are making an impact. Also, we have heard that—I believe to be true is that, there is no one reason why youth drop out of school. Along with that, there is no one methodology for a program that will retain the student in school. But many of the strategies that are used, including things like assessment, follow-up, individual service planning, individual education plans, individual service strategies, those are things that we know work.

I think that where we are trying to move to, and something that the Project Succeed Program has used since its inception, is utilizing a system of integrated service delivery. Utilizing a system of service delivery really speaks to the hallmarks of that kind of methodology, that you recognize that education does not happen in a vacuum. Learning does not only take place in the classroom. Systems affect how people learn and what they learn and what they retain and how they will be able to use those things in their lives. So we have looked at not only what strategies work, but looking at the system and how they are delivered.

One of the other hallmarks, and I outline in my written testimony, actually, three hallmarks that the system of integrated services deliver. Right now, many programs utilize assessment. We have started to look at assessment, not only as a myopic or linear activity, but something that has to be done cyclically. Youth at risk need to work with staff persons or educators, on a continual basis, to assess for their achievements, to assess for their continued needs, to assess for what opportunities and options are out there to meet their needs. Of course, their needs change as they meet

plateaus of achievement and they reach different grade levels and age-appropriate or age-ability standards.

Along with assessment, that could be done in a cyclical way, we also look at follow-up or after-care. So many times our programs, even though they are effective, will have a very limited amount of time that follow-up is done with our youth at risk. Follow-up or after-care could be something that was done throughout a student's career. We have seen that 9th grade is really one of the periods of a student's educational life that they are mostly at risk for dropping out, which is why the Project Succeed program really focuses on 9th grade, and the Achieve program focuses on 6th through 8th, trying to instill some of those opportunities that students will have in terms of a support structure.

So follow-up is something that we look at, that is going to be monumental, in terms of continuing to give youth at risk an ability to return to an area that they may be comfortable with, folks that they have gained a rapport with that can possibly help them out of future situations that might lead to them dropping out.

The last thing I would like to speak on, in terms of utilizing a system of integrated service delivery, are the partnerships that are involved to do such a thing. Utilizing a system such as an integrated service delivery system, every entity in the community that is involved in working with a young person, this would involve our postsecondary institutions, our secondary institutions, community-based organizations, Health and Human Services organizations, working in partnership. And in terms of partnership, there are lots of collaborations that people have. We certainly have many of them. But in terms of partnership, we are talking more about ownership, each entity having ownership for the success of the individual, which could also mean the sharing of resources, the sharing of creating treatment plans so on and so forth.

If we are going to be successful in continuing to see a decline in the dropout rate, I think we have all experienced, and my colleague to my left just talked about a program that was very successful but did not receive further funding, we are going to have to look at the susceptibility of projects that work. We know so many things work, but we are going to have to look at the susceptibility of programs that do work. And I think by creating partnerships and utilizing a true system of service delivery, that is one method that we could use to keep those effective programs in operation for our youth at risk.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hill may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. Thank you very much. I appreciate you being here to testify.

Our final witness is Beverly Averitt, who is the principal at Espanola High School. We are very pleased to have you here. Thank you for coming.

Ms. AVERITT. Thank you for inviting me, Senator. Espanola High School has had a high dropout rate for a number years, ranging from 10 percent to 18 percent in the last six to 8 years. I wish I had Mr. Rounds' problem of one percent. In fact, to make it even sound worse than that, we usually have over 300 freshman entering, and a little over 150 seniors graduate. Due to this consistently

high dropout rate among our students, the Espanola Board of Education formed a Stay In School Blue Ribbon Task Force during the 2001-2002 school year. The task force was assigned a task of gathering data and conducting necessary research in an attempt to identify the underlying issues related to our high dropout rate.

The task force was to then use this data to make recommendations, based on their findings, that might help reduce the dropout rate. The task force consisted of teachers, administrators, parents, students and community members, which included local and State police, Los Alamos National Laboratory employees, Northern New Mexico Community College employees, business owners, and representatives from Senator Bingaman's office.

One of the activities of the task force was to interview both midschool and high school students, as well as students who had dropped out. The task force found that there were almost as many reasons given by students for dropping out as there were dropouts. Some of those reasons were: Classes were too hard, classes were too easy and students became bored, pregnancy, students' need and/or desire to work, students missed too much school for various reasons, students failed courses and did not make them up in summer school and got too far behind in credits to graduate with their class, not enough parental support, and students felt that no one really cared whether they succeeded or dropped out. The one reason that kept coming up with nearly all students interviewed was that these students did not feel there were enough adults at the high school who knew them or cared about them.

Several members of the task force had heard of a program being run at Rio Rancho High School. Members visited Rio Rancho for a day, learned all they could about the program, and brought back as much information as possible. In using this program as a foundation or a basis, the following recommendation was made to the Board, and this was the number one recommendation: Create a student support program in which teachers, administrators and counselors are assigned up to 18 students to mentor, advise and support.

A committee of high school teachers and parents with student input and support, along with personnel support and grants from the LANL Foundation has been working on the design of a somewhat similar program for EVHS. The program has been named Team Up EVHS and was put into effect this past Monday. The main goals of the program are to improve communication with parents through scheduled one half-hour individual appointments to be conducted twice yearly, build teams and team spirit in order to raise the graduation rate by having monthly team meetings, and inform parents and encourage students.

Through this program, we hope to make parents feel more welcome at the school, help them become more involved in their child's education, keep them more informed on school activities, impress upon them the importance of student attendance, give them testing information and results, review graduation requirements, help them select methods to help their students catch up on credits, etc. We also envision that students now have an adult at the school who is their mentor, as well as a team of students who can help them succeed.

The Team Up program targets all students in all grade levels. We have also started two other programs that target only 9th grade students, this grade level being where the largest percentage of dropouts occur. The first of these two programs began with applying for and receiving a two-year grant. The New Mexico Department of Health, in conjunction with the State Department of Education, received Federal funds to assist selected New Mexico schools in developing a dropout prevention program, and EVHS was one of three schools selected.

This program utilizes a case manager to address the needs of each at-risk student that is identified for the project. 30 to 50 at-risk students in the 9th grade will be targeted. By the end of the first year, only those 9th graders who the case manager and counselor feel need to continue in the program will remain as 10th graders, and new incoming 9th graders will be added. The case manager will schedule appointments with the students and parents, make home visits when necessary, bring in outside agencies to work with the families, and do everything in their power to help make these students successful.

This program will go hand-in-hand with the Team Up program, giving additional support to these high-risk freshman. The case manager has been hired and began work this past Monday. And you have heard this already today, but the Department of Health has also changed the name of the project from the Dropout Prevention program to Positive Assistance for Students Success or PASS.

The second of the two programs targeting freshman is the AVID program. AVID is an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination. A team made up of seven faculty members, counselors and administrators attended a week-long AVID training in San Diego this past summer. Incoming freshman students, along with their parents, were then contacted, the program was explained and the students were interviewed.

A total of 23 freshman students were selected to participate in the program. Targeted students were those whose parents had not attended college, but were students the interview committee felt had the potential to succeed if given the necessary guidance and a little extra push. They had GPAs ranging from a 2.0 to 3.5. They are considered high-risk students, but are students willing to try something new to prepare them for college.

During class time, students are taught a variety of techniques, in order to make them more successful students. These techniques include notetaking, asking questions, simple things such as sitting up straight in class and sitting in the front of the classroom. The students also work with tutors who are taught to ask questions of the students, not just give them answers. In addition, there are guest speakers and presenters who work with the class to provide them with valuable information that can be used in our classes now, or give students thoughts for the future.

Parents are expected to be involved with the students in many ways, such as asking questions of their students at home, meeting with the students' teachers on a regular basis, helping in the classroom or even doing public relations to help the program grow for the future.

AVID was selected as a program for the school on the basis of its success, starting in California and spreading to 23 other States and 15 foreign countries. The success rates for AVID students who finish college is 93 percent. I would like to say we are getting a lot of help from Northern New Mexico Community College and from ENLACE in the AVID program.

A fourth initiative that has just begun, but which will continue in school during the next several years, is the New Mexico Initiative on Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support. We were one of 23 schools Statewide to be selected to participate in training to change the way schools look at behavior. The idea is to notice and reward positive behavior rather than focusing on the negative. The research behind this shows that suspending and punishing students does not work and change needs to happen.

A team of students from the school, including one grandparent guardian, participated in the first of several trainings. The team has a coach working with it, and the coach will participate in additional trainings. Through the trainings, the team will learn positive alternatives and interventions versus the traditional exclusionary and punishing solutions. The team will be presenting information they received at their first training to the Espanola High School faculty at an in-service this afternoon.

In addition to the four programs mentioned, we are also still reviewing the structure within the school to implement interventions by the counseling staff, drug prevention specialists, social workers and the PASS case manager, both before students are suspended for inappropriate behavior and after their return from suspension. We have also established a threat assessment team made up of a school administrator, associate superintendent, district safety officer, local police and juvenile probation officers to help with the intervention process.

We are putting much time, effort, money and faith into these programs with the hope that we will be able to decrease the drop-out rate and increase the graduation rate. At this time, only time will tell. And if anyone is interested in information on any of these, I did put handouts at the back of the room. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Averitt may be found in additional material.]

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much. I thank you all for excellent testimony. Let me just ask a few questions that occurred to me. Stan, in your testimony I was struck by the indication that you went to a new policy, I believe this fall, to close your high school campus?

Mr. ROUNDS. Senator, that was actually done 9 years ago.

Senator BINGAMAN. It was?

Mr. ROUNDS. Yes, sir.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. Tell me your thinking on that and how important you think that has been in trying to both improve student performance and keep kids in school.

Mr. ROUNDS. Senator, we believe that for high school students in particular, as well as junior high, that the inability to maintain focus on what should be happening on campus is directly relevant to whether you have the campus open or closed. In the years prior to closing campus, our attendance rates at the high school were

much worse than the attendance rates immediately following that and subsequent to that, and, in fact, continue to increase.

Other things that people don't always think about, when the students leave campus and come back on, so often at high school levels, the problems come back with them, people that you don't want on campus or events that you do not want on campus show back up. A lot of times these are violence issues, drugs issues, things that should not be happening on campus.

As we closed the campus, students became or continued to be focused on what was happening there and did not have these outside issues come into bear. So the safety issue, Senator, is an example, fights and weapons, drugs have gone down dramatically.

Senator BINGAMAN. Now, in practical terms, how do you accomplish this closing of the campus? Do you have an impenetrable barrier around the school that nobody can penetrate? How does that work? [Laughter]

Mr. ROUNDS. The howitzer in the corridor.

Senator BINGAMAN. Right.

Mr. ROUNDS. Senator, we have no fence, in fact, at all around our high school. What we simply have done is declared a closed campus. You do cord off your areas of vehicular traffic and limit the amount of vehicle movement with your staff. You supervise your kids, which you do all day anyway. The issue really becomes what convenience and opportunities have you provided them? In all our campuses, we have brought vendors from in town onto the campus. In fact, we are having a bit of a go right now with our State and Federal food services people about that particular aspect. I will save that for other hearings.

But we felt that was a necessary component so the kids have a reason to stay, a reason to congregate around the campus.

Senator BINGAMAN. They can either eat the school lunch or buy lunch there on campus? Is that the way it works?

Mr. ROUNDS. Yes, sir. That is the way it works. Interestingly, our type A lunch area, the Federal subsidized area, prior to closing the campus, we had an average of 82 students a day eating there. This is in a high school of 1500. Now that we have closed the campus, our average daily lunch count is over 650 on that side, as well as, of course, the participation of the other vendors. So we believe we have increased student nutrition capabilities also.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me just ask, Ms. Averitt, or Mr. Haugen, there, if they have had any experience with this same issue in your schools?

Mr. HAUGEN. As far as closing the schools?

Senator BINGAMAN. Yes.

Mr. HAUGEN. Our schools have been closed as long as I can remember.

Senator BINGAMAN. So you do not have the problem of students coming and leaving at lunch and coming back with problems.

Mr. HAUGEN. No. That has not been a problem for our particular situation.

Senator BINGAMAN. How about you, Ms. Averitt?

Ms. AVERITT. No, We have a closed campus also, and it has been there since I have been there, which is 14 years now we have had a closed campus. Unlike Hobbs, our campus is completely secured

by a fence. We have a few entrance-only gates. We have not, however, been able to bring in vendors at lunch, which is a different problem, because we are on 100 percent free lunch. So we are not allowed to bring in outside vendors.

Senator BINGAMAN. OK. Let me ask about another aspect of this business of people just not coming to school, kids not coming to school. I have had some meetings around the State on this for the last several years. My impression is that one of the problems that schools have is that they do not have good, timely information about who is coming to school and who is not, and any real timely mechanism for getting those kids to school. I don't know what time school starts in the morning. Is it 8 o'clock or 7:30?

Mr. HAUGEN. About that.

Senator BINGAMAN. If a student isn't there, they do not have sort of a ready response. I can remember meeting with the school board and school officials in Santa Fe, and they said, well, their system was, they took attendance in the morning. And then they had a computerized system where they would have somebody there in the central office type in, into this calling machine, I guess, the names of the students that were not there. And then the system was preprogrammed to call the homes of all these kids, and that was their response. And then you talk to the kids and they say, Yeah, I am home watching TV and the phone rings, and some computer program on there talking, telling me I am not at school, and I hang up the phone and go back to watching TV. How much is that a factor? You talk about you have some truancy—I don't know what you called them. You called them something besides truancy officers.

Mr. ROUNDS. They are truancy specialists.

Senator BINGAMAN. Yeah. They are people that go out and bring kids to school, or find out why they are not there. Is that basically it?

Mr. ROUNDS. Senator, yes, it is. And we reached that decision because we had been using something called a Family Involvement Team for a number of years on the very chronic absence issues. We are talking the 20 or more absence kids. Because those are usually very deep systemic problems within the family. What we realized was that families lost control of their children in many cases. And they really appreciate reaching out for assistance in helping get the student to class. These truancy prevention specialists we have are especially trained to not only look for kids, but to identify the patterns that are beginning to emerge at three and five absences, begin to intervene with the home.

In Hobbs, as I mentioned in my testimony, a number of our parents are monolingual Spanish. Many are coming into a world where this is probably not their habit. And they appreciate the opportunity to continue to discuss with them the real root of the problem and counsel on joint efforts of how we are going to intervene with that child. As was said by several people around this table today, there are many different reasons why kids turn off. But, the important thing that I know is, if you do not get them in the door, you cannot teach them. So these officers are doing that, and the results are dramatic. And we will continue to watch that and perhaps expand if we feel the need to.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me ask you, Mr. Haugen, do you have a similar capability, or how do you get kids to school if they do not show up in the morning?

Mr. HAUGEN. Basically, we are very similar to the Hobbs School District. We do have some attendance officers, that their responsibility is to go out and work with the particular schools on contacting the parents. The beginning of the year, they are primarily used in tracking down the no-shows, students who have not reported back to the school at the start of the school year. During the course of the year, then, they work with the individual schools on their daily attendance.

If your question is to how we do it on a daily basis, a lot of that varies on the size of the school. Quite honestly, the elementary schools, most of our are in the 5- to 700 range, where attendance is probably about 97 percent per day. So you are only talking, you know, roughly 20 students that may be absent on any given day, which is fairly easy to contact the parents individually. I have an attendance person who does that.

Gadsden High School, on the other hand, with 2500 students, running about 8 percent absenteeism means, daily, that is probably 160 or so. There we have been using the Santa Fe school system or computerized system to make contact with those parents. We do also have other things set up. As far as secondary schools, the students lose credit in courses at a particular point. Once they have had seven absences in the class, then they lose credit. At that point, it is the parents' responsibility to come in and meet with the administration and clarify the nature of those absences. But then again, it is after they have accrued a certain number of absences.

Senator BINGAMAN. Yes, Mr. Hill? Go right ahead.

Mr. HILL. Just to speak to that point, YDI also operates a charter school. And from our experience running Project Succeed, we knew that a small school was going to be, in our experience, beneficial for youth. In terms of folks not coming to school, we do much of what they are talking about. Our case managers actually try to assess where those ancillary problems are that a young person might have before school or after school.

Then, the expectations, in terms of expelling a student is that, we do not expel anyone. The idea really is that we have made a commitment to understand, to keep our school small. It is a mission-driven school, so that everyone involved in the school, from the principal to the teachers to the janitors to the bus driver, everyone understands the mission. Because 80 percent of the students at the school have already been expelled from other schools. So we know they have a history of problems in terms of getting to school.

So the expectation really is, we are not going to let them go. We are going to go to their homes. We are going to call you. We are going to find you. Whatever we need to do. We will tap into other programs that we have. We have a remediation program, literacy projects, whatever it takes to keep that young person in school. And sometimes, what we found is that sometimes youth who have had trouble with attendance or staying engaged in school sometimes need to get out of the classroom environment and just kind of work on their own with an individualized instructor for a week

or two on something that may be hard for them. Then they can re-integrate into a small class of no more than 15 to 18 people.

Senator BINGAMAN. You know, I have been very impressed with the programs you folks are engaged in. I think the frustration that the schools have, the public schools, is that they do not have the resources to give the individualized attention that you are able to give in yours. I mean, I can remember meeting with Chris Baca and some of the students that were in your program at Rio Grande High School, and talking with the students. And they would say what they liked about the YDI program is all the individualized attention. And I said, Well, why cannot you get that in your normal class work here in Rio Grande High, and they said, Well, it is not possible. There are 35 to 40 kids in each class. The teacher is going to see 160, 180 kids a day, and it is just not realistic to expect the teacher to give me the kind of personalized attention that I can get here in this small group of 15, or whatever it is in the YDI program.

Mr. HILL. I am glad they told you they like that, because most of the time they really hate us for it. We tell them, We are not going to let you go.

Senator BINGAMAN. Yeah. The interesting thing was they were very sympathetic to the teachers in Rio Grande High. And they said, you know, these are teachers who would spend the time with us if they could.

Mr. HILL. Right

Senator BINGAMAN. But they are so overwhelmed with the number of kids that they are trying to provide instruction to, they just cannot spend that much time with us.

Ms. Averitt, let me ask you, how do you deal with the problem there at Espanola of actually getting kids to school if they do not show up when they are supposed to in the morning?

Ms. AVERITT. Not very well, is the way we have been dealing with it. We had, in fact, last year started doing a little researching, contacting the schools that had truant officers to see if that would be a possibility. Funding wise, we are not able to do it. We are still using the automatic dialer that calls home to the parents. But to try to give the parents a chance to be home and not catch the kids during the day, we do not turn the dialer on and start the calls until after 5:00 in the evening. And we run it from 5:00 to 9:00. So we try to get—

Senator BINGAMAN. There is really no effort during the day—if the student does not show up in the morning, there is no effort during that day to get the student to school?

Ms. AVERITT. Not at all. We are still trying to find a good way to do that. We have not come up with one yet.

Senator BINGAMAN. Let me ask, on this one other issue that has come up here, on the previous panel and again here, about the most troublesome year being the 9th grade. I think several of you maybe mentioned that. I think, Ms. Averitt, you mentioned that and Mr. Hill. I have heard that before. Any of you give your ideas on this, but my impression is that that is because the 9th grade is the first year that the student is in the larger high school, so that the student can be in a middle school, which is smaller, and then all of a sudden is being dumped into a 2500-person high

school, and they show up there in the fall and look around and say, This is not for me, or may decide, even before they show up, This is not for me, you know, Nobody knows me in this place, and I don't know anybody in this place.

Is the problem that we—again maybe this is my obsession here, but these very large high schools are structured in such a way that the connectiveness, that we were talking about in the previous panel, is really not there for a lot of the students who are going into the 9th grade. Am I right about this problem? Since the microphone is already down here, let me start at that end and go all the way down, and we will end up with Stan.

Ms. AVERITT. Yes, I think that has a lot to do with it. In fact, the transition from the midschool into the 9th has probably been even worse for the high school in the last couple of years, because the 7th grade is on one campus, the 8th grade is on one campus. First of all, the first 6 years they were in their small communities. The Espanola schools are made up from students from 11 completely different communities. They come all together for the first time in 7th grade. They are on one campus by themselves, then they go to the 8th grade for the second year, and still on one campus. In 9th grade they enter high school and come in with everyone else.

And we have been trying to come up with some transitional-type programs for the students to help them feel, I guess, not even more welcome, but not so lost. And we have played around with the—in fact, next year, one of two things will happen. Either they will remain at the high school and we will try to put them into a Smaller Learning Community, called a Freshman Academy, or they may stay at the 8th grade and we may start the high school with 10th grade.

The 8th grade, right now, phase II of the building is happening. It is a brand-new building. Last year we started with just 8th graders. This next year we are trying to determine whether to move the 7th grade up with the 8th or leave the 9th grade back with the 8th. That is one thing. I am not sure what is going to happen yet.

Senator BINGAMAN. I visited Cibola High there in Albuquerque that had the 9th Grade Academy. They used the funds through this Smaller Learning Communities Grant to set up what they called their 9th Grade Academy, and they kept their 9th graders in a separate wing. They had lunch together. They stayed together as a student body during that extra year. And they believed, at least at the time I was there, and this was a couple of years ago, they told me they were very optimistic this was going to substantially reduce their dropout problem. I don't know that that was the result, but that was the way they described it.

Ms. AVERITT. We also applied for a Smaller Learning Communities Grant, but we did not get the funding. We will have to figure out how to do it without the help. It will mean more teachers and everything.

Senator BINGAMAN. Right. Mr. Hill?

Mr. HILL. I would say your assessment is pretty dead on. In addition to that, I would say that because that is a transitory year in their educational careers, not utilizing something like a System of Integrated Service Delivery, students who are leaving middle

school going to high school, not only are in a new environment with new people, but what they are actually losing is their support system, and they have to create an entirely new one.

We actually created the Project Achieve program because we saw that phenomena happening with students coming out of middle school into high school. YDI, as a community-based organization, has the ability to work with schools. For example, Rio Grande kids who are leaving Ernie Pyle to go to work with YDI, this creates the continuity for them, transition from an environment they know into one they really have no support. They can always fall back on the external support that YDI provides.

In case management, mental health and so forth, we have been able to act somewhat as an advocate and bridge from middle school to high school and create some continuity for young students who are leaving and moving into high school.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you. Yes?

Mr. HAUGEN. Senator Bingaman, we totally agree with you as far as the smaller schools being more effective. I think a lot of times you see, in high schools now, the 9th grade is kind of like the freshman year in college, a screening point to eliminate people and put them into a certain category. In our district we have two high schools. You see a difference between the two schools, even though the populations are almost identical.

Gadsden High School has approximately 2500 students, and Santa Teresa about 1100 students. You can see the difference in terms of their attendance. Gadsden's attendance rate of 90 to 92 percent, and Santa Teresa, the smaller school, has 95 to 96 percent. Their dropout rates from last year correlate to that. Gadsden ran slightly under 8 percent; Santa Teresa, 5 percent.

All those factors, I think, contribute to the success of the students. And the fact they do not have the contact that they need, they do not feel like there is a person, within such a large system, is kind of lost, particularly freshman. Santa Teresa High School went to a team concept similar to middle schools, with pods or teams of teachers that work specifically with freshman to make that contact. That has worked very successfully there. We are looking to incorporate something similar to that at Gadsden High School, with the very large freshman class we have there. They are very correlated in terms of the size of the school and other factors.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much. Stan, you get the last word here.

Mr. ROUNDS. Senator, thank you. Let me say to you, we studied this issue very carefully in Hobbs. We were losing a lot of kids in that freshman school, 600 in size. This year we have had a tremendous start. So, certainly, size would be an issue, but I believe it may be more than that.

The school's structure last year, 7, 8 and the junior high, three of which we have, also, were approximately 600 in size. We were still losing our 9th graders. So the other part of the mosaic we are looking at is not just size, perhaps it is also the focus of the mission. That is why we felt we needed to have a freshman school standing alone. I am happy to report to you we handpicked a hundred percent of the staff for that school. This year we also added a Dean of Students, and we believe part of the answer is to in-

crease our mission of student services. Kids at that age need special handling, special care.

A lot of the points that have been raised around this table today, that we are trying to develop without extra help from anybody. This is directly an operational process. Certainly you are dead-on as far as school size, with one other caveat to this.

The second factor we see is transition from elementary to junior high school, and that is our next most important mission. The transition of 9th graders out of junior high, we believe, need a special focus there. I am happy to report that so far this year we are having tremendous results also in that respect. So it is a little bit of a convoluted answer. I think you are certainly on as far as the need to focus on 9th grade and reduce school size.

Senator BINGAMAN. I do think these transition points where you take a student who has been going to one school and move them across town, or blocks away, and tell them to show up somewhere else, I think that is where some of the problem of kids leaving school and losing interest and feeling disconnected, I think that is where it occurs.

We have got some people in the audience who want to speak up. Let me call on them just for short statements, if they would, and conclude the hearing. Yes, sir?

Mr. LISTON. My name is Dr. Earl Liston, and I teach at Dona Ana Branch Community College. I heard several comments made about the teenage pregnancy problem we have in New Mexico. And right now I am working quite a bit with a program, this is directed at trying to prevent dropouts of pregnant teenagers. And right now in New Mexico we have approximately 38 or 41, I believe it is, high schools participating in this program, with approximately 700 girls. The figure changes every day. But I think we are—that it is a successful program.

It is a controversial program because a lot of people say the minute we start providing day care and instructional classes for these kids, it encourages more to join the group. We are not finding that to be true, at least for the group that is headquartered in Socorro. I think we really need to think about that. For example, here in Las Cruces we have about 3300 high school girls, and right now, in these programs for parenting, we have about 90 girls. That is about 2 to 3 percent of our girls in Las Cruces in the programs. The percentage of pregnant girls we have in our high schools is much higher than that, because many do not participate in this program.

I think that is a big group of kids. We are talking nearly 700 that we can possibly stop from dropping out. In my college classes, I have a lot of these girls who did drop out, and they are now in their early 1920s, and they are coming back after getting their GEDs at community college. And if you come to our graduations you will see more kids in gowns graduating from GEDs than we do have AAs. So it is an encouraging thing to see happening, with them coming back and then they end up taking classes.

I am teaching a nursing division, and many of those now want to become nurses, but they are 20-, 21-year-old people who have one, two or even sometimes three children in elementary school, meaning they had these children at 13, 14 and 15. I was talking

to some 13-year-old mothers the other day. So we are seeing that is a burgeoning problem. There is not a school administrator in here who does not know what that is about.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much for your comment. I will take one more question and then I would like to conclude the hearing because these witnesses need to get back on the road to their distant parts of the State.

Ms. Sanchez. My name is Alicia Sanchez. I am the director of the Southern New Mexico Collaborative. The first comment is about data. As long as we continue to collect data on an event level, we are collecting data only for data sake. That does not give us the information that we need to create the appropriate programs and be able to give resources where they are needed. I would think, at the Congressional level, if we made some decisions about longitudinal studies as opposed to event studies, then we have data we can use for programs' sake. So I think that is really important that we do tell the NCES that we need to get away from events and more into longitudinal studies.

The second thing, we have heard a lot this morning about interconnectedness, but the interconnectedness has been about institutions or maybe even individuals inside. I would like to just say there is an interconnectedness that relates to Latino kids in terms of their psyche, and when you look at Latino kids in schools today they are invisible. We are not in the text books. We are not in the magazines. The only thing you see about Latinos is we are in prisons, or gangs or whatever the case is. We need some help at the Congressional level to change the text books and push Hard Cope and Brace and all these other groups to begin to be multicultural so we are included in the books.

One of the things our kids say now, because we are providing a lot of Latino literature, You mean there are Latinos that write books? And they are writing about things as simple as *Mi Casita*, and presenting ideas in another way that, Wow, this is exciting. So this is a really big thing, and we need to work on that.

The last thing I want to say is Las Cruces school districts have, under the leadership of Mr. Davis and the school board, we now are going to have partnership with an action team that, together, we are going to begin to look at what are the barriers to success for students. We will provide strategic goals that the school board then can put into its own strategic plan. I think it is going to be exciting. That partnership will provide some lessons for other groups.

Senator BINGAMAN. Very, very good. One person here who wanted to speak. You are going to really be the final word. Go ahead.

Ms. Hines. Maria Hines, and I am also with the ENLACE program. And I am one of the parents that are developing Family Centers at Albuquerque High. And when you are talking about the way the children transfer from 8th grade to 9th grade, where we have been real successful is parents from the high school level are going down to the middle school and we are meeting with those parents. And then when we have met with 20 students, we follow 20 students from 8th grade to 9th grade. And it is the constant connection that we have with them at the family center, not only with the parents there but the parents coming into the school.

The other thing I think you need to know is the family is very instrumental in really challenging our kids, also. We just had our PSAT tests, and we have a really low turnout of our kids taking that test. But through our efforts, through the parents getting out there and telling the kids they need to take this, it is really important. Their response was, I am not smart enough, I don't have the funding, I can't do it. So it is that encouragement that is needed. So this year, for the first time at Albuquerque High, we had 40 kids. It was the highest turnout we had. We are encouraging our kids they can do it.

Last, but not least, what we are trying to develop is a community within the school. Because I think we can develop a lot of programs, but until we truly get our parents involved, I think we are going to continue to keep seeing the same issues.

Senator BINGAMAN. Thank you very much. Thank you for that testimony. And let me thank all these witnesses. Again, I think all this is very useful to me in trying to understand the issues, trying to identify things we can try to do, to be supportive, out of Congress. I appreciate it. I think it has been a useful hearing, and we will undoubtedly have more of these in the future. This problem is not going away. I think it is getting somewhat better. I think the focus on this problem is very encouraging. I think that that is a major step forward, and so I appreciate all the attention to it. And again, I thank the witnesses for being here.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

PREPARED STATEMENT KRISTIN MEURER

Good morning, I am Dr. Kristine Meurer, Director of the School Health Unit of the State Department of Education. It is a privilege for me to be here representing the State Department and State Board of Education at the invitation of Senator Jeff Bingaman. We look forward to providing testimony on the important topic of dropout prevention to the Senate's Health, Education and Pension Committee.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Michael Davis sends his greeting and an apology for being unable to attend this hearing. The State Board of Education is also meeting today in Santa Fe.

We truly appreciate the work that Senator Bingaman does on behalf of New Mexicans. In particular, he has become a champion of many programs to improve public education and the educational outcomes of our children.

A specific area of his attention and concern has been students who drop out of school before earning a diploma. He has been diligent in calling this concern to the attention of educators and the public, and has been a leader in seeking and securing resources to address the needs of students at risk of dropping out.

The State Department of Education wishes to go on record in support of Senator Bingaman's efforts to continue to fund the federal dropout program that he has been so instrumental in establishing. We hope that our testimony today will reinforce the fact that the concerted efforts of policy makers and educators can have a tremendous positive impact on school completion.

The primary focus of my remarks will be to provide an overview of the status of the dropout problem in New Mexico. Those of you who are familiar with this topic are aware that there has historically been a good deal of confusion and frustration in understanding and interpreting dropout statistics due to the wide variety of methods that were used to collect, compute and report this data. To remedy this problem, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has attempted during the past two decades to establish and get all states to agree to adopt a standard methodology to report dropout data. New Mexico adopted the NCES standards and definitions in 1992-93, and is one of 37 states currently using this methodology to report results. This standardization ensures the reliability and consistency of New Mexico dropout data for the past decade.

The method used by New Mexico to report statistics is called an "event" rate. This statistic represents the students who drop out of school during a specific school year (and don't re-enroll) without completing a high school program. This measure provides important information on an annual basis of how effective we have been in keeping students in school.

So how has New Mexico fared in this past decade using NCES dropout standards? As you can see from our table, our dropout rate in 1992-93 was 8.0%. Over the next two years it climbed to 3.7%. Senator Bingaman and state policy makers expressed great concern about this increasing trend and challenged educators to better address the needs of students at risk of leaving school prematurely.

As a result of this public attention and their own concerns about increasing dropout rates, educators began to focus more intently on solutions to this problem. Many schools and districts developed and implemented strategies to identify and intervene with students at risk of dropping out, and to attract dropouts back into their programs. At the same time, the State Board of Education and the State Legislature collaborated on a proposal to add an "at risk" factor to the public school funding formula to increase district resources to support intervention programs.

State law established the at-risk factor in 1997-98, and schools used this resource to expand existing programs and establish new programs. The increased attention, focus and resources are working. New Mexico's dropout rate has been steadily declining since 1994-95. The reductions have been significant, as you can see from this table. Today, it is my privilege to release for the first time the statewide dropout rate for the 2000-2001 school year. The dropout rate is 5.3%. This is the lowest dropout rate since New Mexico began reporting dropout rates in 1977-1978. The 2000-2001 complete dropout report with data on the performance of all schools and districts in the state will be released in December 2002.

As significant as the percentage reduction has been since 1994-95, the actual numbers have even more impact. The 1994-95 rate of 8.7% represents 7,792 students who dropped out that year. The 5.3% rate for 2000-2001 represents 5,095 students. In other words, New Mexico educators have been successful in developing strategies and programs to keep 2,697 students in school that would have been dropouts just 7 years ago!

The NCES also uses US census data to report “status” dropout rates which measure young adults ages 18-24 who are not currently enrolled in school and who have not received a high school diploma or GED. This statistic has also improved significantly in New Mexico since 1994-96, (78.8%) compared to 83% in 1998-2000. While this is still slightly below the national completion rate of 85.7%, New Mexico now out performs our neighboring states of Colorado (81.6%), Texas (79.4%) and Arizona (73.5%) in high school completion rates.

Schools have also made considerable progress in reducing the dropout rates for ethnic populations with historically high dropout rates. The dropout rate for Native Americans in 2000-2001 is 5.9%, a reduction from 8.6% in 1994-95. Schools have also had success in impacting the area where dropout rates have always been the highest in New Mexico, Hispanic students. The rate for these students has fallen from 10.9% in 1994-95 to 6.7% in 2000-2001.

This is extremely good news and cause for congratulations to the New Mexico educators who have been instrumental in this turnaround. But there is still a great deal of work to be done to ensure that all students complete a high school program and have the opportunity to pursue a career or further education options of their choice.

I hope you will have the opportunity today to hear directly from some of the practitioners responsible for these positive statistical trends. While policy makers and state and district administrators can help create the climate for successful dropout prevention programs, it is the dedication of those who work in the “trenches,” that keep kids in school. Credit should also be given to those thousands of “at-risk” students who have overcome challenges and persevered to complete their high school education.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to spend a few minutes reviewing the current priorities of the State Board and State Department of Education in addressing the needs of high-risk students.

The State Board continues to place great emphasis on early literacy as a primary strategy in ensuring success in any student’s mid school and high school years. The Board is committed to the goal of having all students reading at grade level by grade 3.

Funds made available to the state under the “Reading First” program of “No Child Left Behind” (the federal reauthorization of ESEA) will provide our state with over \$8 million dollars this year to support literacy in grades K-3. We are proud that we are among the first 10 states to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education for this program due to the quality of our application, and we are confident that research-based approaches to literacy will help us reach our grade 3 goal.

The State Board has also placed a priority on student completion by including recommendations for high school reform in its 2003 legislative package. The Board is highly supportive of changes in law, regulation and practice that will give greater flexibility, to schools in designing programs to meet the diverse needs of their students. This will allow schools to better align coursework and graduation requirements to post high school pathways selected by students.

The Board is also proposing programs that will provide more stability and consistency when students wish to get concurrent high school and college credit by taking a course at a local post secondary school. In addition the board is proposing a “middle college” pilot that will allow students to work on both a high school diploma and an associates (2 year) degree in a compressed period of time.

The Board is also looking for opportunities for students to earn credit through high quality virtual schooling options.

I would also like to briefly mention a dropout prevention program that is currently being piloted through a partnership between the State Department of Education and the Department of Health. Senators Bingaman and Domenici have been instrumental in providing federal funding for this pilot. I have been personally involved in both the development and implementation of this program, and am highly optimistic that this will prove successful.

The dropout prevention pilot project’s name is PASS- Positive Assistance for Student Success. For the next two years three high Schools in New Mexico- Cuba, Belen and Espanola Valley High Schools are each receiving \$183,000 to participate in the pilot project.

The pilot project is providing direct support to 9th grade students who are struggling with grades, attendance or personal issues, which make them more likely to drop out of school. The goal of the program is to provide support to students and their families early in their high school education so that they are less likely to see dropping-out of school as their only option. Struggling students are referred to case managers who work with the student, their family and the school community to

identify problems and create positive solutions to help the student succeed. The case managers also help students and families find other in-school and community services that will support them. The funds are also being used to develop support services in such tutoring, mentoring, and mental health counseling for at-risk students.

The coordinator of the PASS program, Nissa Patterson, is here today. She provides on-going technical assistance and training to the pilot schools and the case managers.

In summary, we have accomplished a great deal, but there is still much work to be done to ensure that all students complete high school. I will be glad to respond to questions or to obtain any additional information requested by the committee. Thank you again for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the State Board and State Department of Education.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAREN SANCHEZ-GRIEGO,

ENLACE “ENgaging Latino Communities for Education” is a regional and State-wide collaborative for the purpose of leveraging educational impacts for success among Hispanic Youth.

ENLACE in New Mexico is a movement embraced by the community to strengthen a collaborative effort to affect our educational pipeline.

45% of Hispanic students in the state of New Mexico do not graduate from High School therefore not affording them the opportunity to obtain a higher education.

50% of Hispanic students on New Mexico Higher Education campuses do not receive their degrees.

1. New Mexico received W.K. Kellogg Foundation Funding in the amount of 4.9 Million dollars for 4 years to address Hispanic Higher Education.

2. 125 institutions applied for the initial planning grant, with 30 of the 125 received planning funds based on this proposal. New Mexico was one of the 30 to receive \$100,000 for the planning phase.

4. The planning monies were to be used to determine barriers to educational success create and establish well-designed programs that would assist Hispanic students in the state of New Mexico to graduate from High School and go on to college. All programs address the (K-16) pipeline.

5. Programs were developed with the partners in our Community. Parents, families, business, non-profit organizations, community grass-roots groups, students, professors, teachers, educational institutions, administrators, and New Mexico charity groups. (This recognizes that education is everyone's business).

6. Out of the 30 states, which received a planning grant, only 7 states were given implementation grants. New Mexico was chosen as one of the 7 states.

7. There are 4 grants in New Mexico, one in the Southern part of state Las Cruces, Northern part, Santa Fe, Espanola, etc., and Central New Mexico, Albuquerque, as well as an overall state grant, which encompasses all of New Mexico.

8. Our goals are to make systemic changes in our educational systems that are positive and productive for Hispanic students.

9. We are also looking at National Policy changes in reference to Hispanic students and the future of their education.

In the creation of this statewide collaborative model our goal was to have a strong impact statewide, and this is currently being done. We have seen significant potential for the future in terms of making history in statewide educational development with others. It took several leaders from across our state with higher education leading the charge to have a dialogue to work towards programs that are best for Hispanics in our state kindergarten through college, and do this with limited funding.

Together we are sharing limited resources, which would maximize our efforts to impact our youth. Our collaborative efforts have already began the process in creating change not only locally and regionally in New Mexico, but at State and National levels as well. We through ENLACE are caring for the “WHOLE CHILD” in walking the talk of Hispanic cultural ways, values and including families as part of the educational structure of institutions.

Our focus and collaboration statewide deals with: 1. K-16 education, policy analysis revision and reform; 2. Leadership development at student, family, community, and institutional levels; 3. Enhance statewide effectiveness of communication and dissemination throughout the K-16 pipeline focused on sharing and refining “best practices”; and 4. Close coordination of process and outcome evaluation on three levels (cluster statewide, local projects) to improve educational outcomes for all New Mexico Hispanics.

New Mexico is the only statewide collaboration nationwide and was chosen due to our states vision and thinking outside the box. Many Hispanic children and fami-

lies would not have access to ENLACE, via funding without great people in our state who had a vision.

Statewide all projects have three distinct, yet interlocking programs to reach our goals and fall in line with President Bush's Executive order 13230, in the development of an advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, to address such concerns. The development of ENLACE came before the Presidents Executive Order.

Programs to reach our Goals and assist in a positive effect on Hispanic dropouts in our state are being accomplished via the following components.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Education Access Rooms (EAR's) are being utilized as extensions to our local schools in local community centers, where students receive much needed credits. Education Access Rooms use distance-learning resources, tutors, and parent involvement. We target 9th and 10th grade students at risk of dropping out these centers work closely with these students' families,

FAMILY CENTERS

Family Centers are currently located at three high schools and we are in the process of development of these centers at each high school across the state. These centers were the brainchild of Grass-roots community activists Maria Hines and Christina Chavez-Apodaca. They provide a multitude of services, but mostly they empower families in the schools surrounding community to Have a voice in the education of their children, at the same time as providing a unique place where families can come and share there concerns about our schools, one-on-one with other parents. The Family Centers also have a strong relationship with bringing students who have dropped out back to school. Parents receive lists of students who are considered dropouts from the principal and/or are not attending classes, these parents then go door to door within the community speaking to students and parents on these lists asking them why their student are not in school and how they can assist in getting the students back to school. Our parents call these "knock and talks." A significant number of students who have dropped out have returned back to school because of these effort. Parent Universities are helping parents become strong advocates and coaches for their children.

RETENTION

ENLACE has a variety of retention components within the grant and the retention efforts steam from K-16. Our students have mentors at all levels, support on campuses through course development such as; Chicano Studies classes, outside course work at the neighboring community centers, one-on-one support to assist with professors, financial aide, and leadership to assist in tackling the bureaucratic systems.

In order to address the needs of Hispanic students throughout our educational pipeline, we have targeted key points of the educational systems to intervene and assist students. Beginning in the middle schools, mentors are provided for at-risk students. In the high schools, Family Centers/Parent Universities will assist the schools and families to connect to better serve students. Chicano Studies courses and Latino literature at all ENLACE target high schools will provide culturally relevant teaching and empower Hispanic students to excel in their studies. AVIDS courses have also been added. At out institutions of higher education throughout the state Early Warning Intervention systems are in place to assist incoming freshman maneuver through the educational system and succeed.

A very unique component in which university students participate in mentoring "at risk" middle school students provides one-on-one relationship building, provides a supportive environment for students to obtain academic success, make a unique connection, encourage leadership, and provides support for these students to stay in school.

Over 1500 students from across New Mexico have received support from ENLACE.

HISPANIC TEACHER PIPLINE

As we know the success of student retention greatly depends on good teaching and teachers. Therefore we have developed the Hispanic Teacher Pipeline to increase the Teacher pool in New Mexico and provide opportunities within the pipeline for Hispanics young and old to obtain a higher decree in the field of teaching.

PATHWAYS TO TEACHING

In an effort to ensure that our teacher population reflects the cultural wealth and diversity of New Mexico, Hispanic students will be exposed to teaching as a career as early as elementary school and on through college. The Pathways to Teaching program will encourage local Hispanic students to pursue teaching by providing them with shadowing experiences, workshops, and scholarship assistance. Additionally, Educational Assistants are encouraged to finish their teaching degrees to return to and work in New Mexico.

EVALUATION

As we know in order to make systemic changes for Hispanics in the state of New Mexico we need to have data both qualitative and quantitative that show how the effects of the ENLACE movement are in creating better more productive citizens in the state of New Mexico. This is a strong component, and these results will be shared with the main stakeholders in New Mexico as we progress to right for legislative and national policy issues for Hispanics in our state as well as in the nation.

Given the mission of promoting greater access to higher education, retention and graduation from higher educational institutions for Latino/Hispanic youth, ENLACE is organized to address policy at the institutional, local, state and federal levels. To achieve this, the ENLACE initiative identifies the institutional practices of barriers that interfere with student recruitment achievement, retention, and graduation. In addition, we are addressing local school district policies that can facilitate the goals of the ENLACE initiative. We are working with local partnerships as catalysts for surfacing and informing state policymakers as then grapple with budget and policy priorities. We are informing state policymakers at the state level, where much of the education policies are generated. The collective lessons learned from the 13 ENLACE sites Nationwide will be instrumental as the initiative collaborates with other national entities to inform both the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act as it relates to unique and specific needs of Latino/Hispanic students) and the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). We are providing services and support to students within the (K-16) educational system. ENLACE is the first initiative with a national impact and will have documented results about how to support the educational success of Latino/Hispanic students nationwide.

This nation is in a crisis in reference to Hispanic/Latino education, and it has a direct impact on our future economic health. Therefore financial and legislative support nationally is greatly needed to sustain the efforts ENLACE has made in retaining dropout students and moving them on to higher education. We applaud the Kellogg Foundation for their initiative to address dropout's retention and access to higher education for Latino youth. We look forward to work with the Federal Government to increase educational access for Latinos.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MCCLELLAN HALL

The National Indian Youth Leadership Project is a non-profit, youth development organization that has been working with young people for nearly 20 years. Our work is based on a coherent set of principles and beliefs about how young people can develop their skills and competencies to become capable individuals. Although we have been funded by various federal and state agencies to do "prevention", whether it is specifically targeted toward alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, dropout or other perceived deficits, our programs all include the basic components of outdoor adventure, service and service-learning, blended with a strong cultural awareness component. Our approaches, although they are primarily targeted to Native American youth, have been used with mixed populations in various venues and have been successful in building resiliency, self-confidence and self-efficacy.

In 2002, NIYLP was recognized by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (Rockville, Md) with the Exemplary Program Award for our Project Venture approach. PV is typical of all NIYLP programs in our approach to prevention. We never call our programs "prevention programs" and we don't directly talk about the topic we are working to prevent. Project Venture focuses on positive alternative activities, which engage young people in meaningful roles in community, encourage participants to stretch beyond self-imposed limitations and develop skills which will foster resiliency. Our evaluation data places us among the top four or five programs in a recent national cross-site evaluation study conducted by CSAP. In addition, we were found to be the most effective program, of all those serving Native American populations. As a result of our national recognition, we now have nearly 20 replication sites across the United States. These programs are funded by a variety of

sources, but are intended to adapt the principles of our model in various tribal and mixed populations of youth, in Hawaii, Alaska, North Carolina, Montana, Idaho, Arizona and New Mexico. As many as 10 new sites may be starting up in 2003.

The schools are the most obvious places where we have been able to access populations of young people to recruit for our programs. Alternative school programs, public, tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, as well as other programs also offer accessibility to numbers of young people. However, we recognize that large numbers of disaffected young people leave school before graduation, for many of the same reasons that are cited for involvement in Alcohol, tobacco and other drug abuse. In our experience, going back nearly 20 years, a number of factors influence the relationships that young people, particularly those from so-called minority groups, have with the schools. The following questions are relevant: Are the school administrators friendly towards the particular cultural group? Is the school system parent-friendly? Are there subtle messages that discourage or exclude certain groups? Does the school system embrace the culture of the community? Are there members of the cultural group represented in the school staff makeup? Are there opportunities for experiential learning? Does the school have any accommodations to different learning styles? What are the attitudes of the administration toward youth culture, in general? These are just a few of the factors that may impact the dropout rate. In Native American communities, which have the highest dropout rates in New Mexico, as well as nationally. We have noticed some trends and can offer some recommendations and strategies that will increase the probability that our youth will complete high school. Three things schools can do immediately to alter the dropout rate:

SERVICE-LEARNING

In our approach to dropout prevention, we encourage schools to be more student and community-friendly. Offering alternative approaches, such as service-learning is one way to extend the boundaries of the classroom to include the community. Partnering with Community-based Organizations shows respect and makes a statement about the commitment of the school to the community. Student-driven projects, where community needs are researched, assessed and projects planned with extensive student input are a proven effective way to engage young people in issues that are meaningful to them and get them to invest themselves in their community. Youth voice should not be seen as optional or irrelevant. Quality service-learning opportunities have strong connections to the academic curriculum and can support the culture of the community. Intergenerational projects, which link youth and elders have great potential for authentic learning opportunities, as well as building connections to the culture and community. Conversely, alienation is seen as a major factor in youth violence, vandalism and general apathy in our communities.

QUALITY AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

One trend that we have observed is that the schools have increasingly become more like the prison industry, even adopting some of the same vocabulary. Pressures to raise standardized test scores has eliminated many of the little things that schools can do to make young people more comfortable. Economic realities have eliminated many of the courses (arts, music and others) that young people used to enjoy as electives. Other extracurricular activities have been limited or curtailed due to budget constraints. Budget cuts often limit the transportation options, which impact after school possibilities. In rural areas, many communities simply can't afford to run extra busses. Many teachers are overworked and underappreciated and often can't take on one more program. However, the after school programs are often the only time teachers and students in need of help can find the time to try alternative approaches and have more one-on-one opportunities. The daily routine for most teachers does not allow individual attention.

A quality after school program could make the difference between success and failure. In many cases the perception is that students are blamed for the failures of the school system and teachers assume a punitive attitude towards so-called minority group students. This is especially evident where Native youth, who come to school speaking a language other than English, are perceived to be holding the school back, in terms of test scores, reading levels. etc.

ADVENTURE PROGRAMMING/RECONNECTING WITH THE NATURAL WORLD

Among other things, our programs have been very successful, in what evaluators call "school-bonding", which includes improved attendance, reduced disciplinary incidents, improved grades and increased involvement in school-related activities. In

our experience, young people have a different perception of school when they have shared experiences with teachers outside the classroom walls. The natural world provides a context for activities that challenge young people to stretch beyond self imposed limitations. Dialogue with young people, where adults help young people draw meaning from experience, enhances learning opportunities and helps both teachers and students realize that serious learning often takes place outside of school. Respect for the environment is difficult to develop indoors. The holistic approach reaches young people in ways that are not possible in a classroom.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUR APPROACHES

Programs must be holistic, incorporating physical, cognitive, psychosocial and spiritual development; Experiential, learning by doing; Structured risk and challenge; Connected to the natural world; Student/youth centered; Developmentally appropriate scope and sequence of activities; Culturally relevant; Focus on building life skills and relationships; and High coherence and intensity of interventions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Project Venture consistently reduces overall risk levels for program youth compared to non-program peers (American Drug and Alcohol Survey).

Program youth demonstrate greater degree of internal locus of control and sense of empowerment that comparison group at all ages, at twice the rate for high school age group. (Locus of Control Scale for Youth).

High school program youth show significant reduction in past 30 day alcohol use, in feelings of depression and in aggressive behavior when compared to nonprogram youth. (Strategies for Success survey).

Middle school program youth score more favorably than comparison peers in areas of depression, aggressive behavior and in perception of harm caused by alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. (Strategies for Success survey).

Project Venture recognized as one of top four prevention programs and top program of all serving Native American youth in national cross-site evaluation study of over 80 CSAP-funded programs. 2002 US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

The following is a summary of major findings from an extensive national cross-site evaluation study conducted by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, completed in 2002, by Dr. Fred Springer, of EMT Associates.

As youth age, levels of risk and protection shift considerably. The findings on risk, protection and substance abuse and the age of youth reveals a consistent pattern. As youth move through the adolescent years there is a steady movement from the protective to the risk conditions in most of the external and internal factors. The movement is greater in family bonding, school bonding and peer attitudes-those factors that refer to the social environments to which youth are building attachments as they mature. In my assessment, this means that as young people move through the adolescent years, family and school become less influential and the peer group becomes stronger. This presents a challenge to schools to be aware that they need to do more to attract and bond with young people. However, the trend with schools seems to be to toughen policies and become less flexible at this critical juncture.

Gender plays an important role in risk, protection, and substance use. The data suggest that conditions in the neighborhood have a greater influence on substance use in males than in females, while the relationships between all the internal risk and protection factors and substance use are substantially stronger for females than for males. This finding may help us understand why more males than females seem to be dropping out of school. Young men need to be bonding with positive influences at this critical age, yet most of the accessible role models seem negative (media, music, etc.).

Connectedness protect against substance use. Positive behavioral outcomes among youth reflect a tight interweaving of external and internal protective factors. Connectedness to family and school forms the core of this protection. Meaningful involvement is key to connectedness. When the external environments of family and school offer youth involvement that is challenging, provides recognition, and is rewarding, these environments serve as powerful protective factors against substance use and will increase the likelihood of staying in school.

The peer environment is critically linked to substance use. Youth whose peers do not use substances tend not to use substances themselves. Youth whose peers disapprove of substance use also report less use of substances. Because peer relationships are strongly associated with the family, school, and community environments in which youth reside, positive changes in those external environments can effect the peer environment and impact individual substance use. This obviously goes beyond programs such as DARE, that have no evidence of meaningful lasting impact.

The schools have to welcome young people and provide a nurturing environment. In reality, youth perceive schools to be increasingly rigid and inflexible. The environment in many schools is perceived to be more like prison.

Broadening the range of protective influences in the external environments increases protection against substance use. Efforts to strengthen families (by encouraging communication, appropriate supervision, and positive norm setting) and to strengthen schools as caring communities (to improve school bonding) increase the protection of youth against substance use and increase the likelihood of staying in school.

In our conversations with Dr. Springer, the most important factor he found in his extensive analysis of prevention programs was the concept of "connectedness". This seems to be the single factor that comes through in reading the study. The efforts that were successful in preventing alcohol, substance abuse, dropout, etc. had the concept of connectedness in common.

McClellan Hall is the Founder and Executive Director of the National Indian Youth Leadership Project, a Gallup-based national non-profit established in 1986. Mr. Hall is of Cherokee descent, with roots in both North Carolina and Oklahoma. He has devoted nearly 30 years to serving Native American and other youth, as a teacher, counselor, principal of two tribal schools and a consultant. He is the recipient of the Kurt Hahn Award, from the Association for Experiential Education (named for the founder of Outward Bound and the United World College program), the Spirit of Crazy Horse Award (from the Black Hills Institute and Augustana College) and other awards. Mr. Hall is a graduate of the University of Washington's Native Teacher Education Program and holds a Masters Degree from Arizona State University.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STAN ROUNDS

When it comes to drop out statistics in Hobbs, the numbers speak for themselves. The percentage of kids who dropped out of Hobbs High School before graduation dipped from 3.4 percent in 1995-96 to 1 percent in 2001-2002.

That compares to the statewide average of 6 percent.

During that same time span, the percentage of children who entered a Hobbs kindergarten class and graduated 12 years later jumped to from 45.3 percent to 87 percent.

But putting a face on the numbers might be the easier approach.

So that's why I'll start with Jake Loflin.

Last year at this time Jake was a Hobbs ninth-grader headed for trouble—in school and out. A drug user who had anger issues and was a discipline problem, Jake faced long-term suspension and was on the brink of leaving school for good. However, he also had the option of enrolling in the Hobbs School District's TARS program, a bootcamp style class that's a combination of calisthenics, crew cuts and tough love.

After spending 16 weeks in the program that requires students to curb both their attitude and temper, Laughlin—with other spit-and-polished classmates in uniform—marched to the front of the Hobbs School Board room last Tuesday night and collected his TARS diploma.

His mom and plenty of other proud parents attended a ceremony that had more than one person reaching for their Kleenex.

Hobbs Mayor Bobby Wallach showed up too. To give Jake a heroism award for helping save the lives of an El Paso family whose boat flipped over at Brantley Lake this summer.

"I don't think he would have had the forethought to strap on a lifejacket and jump in and help those people if it weren't for TARS—for the discipline he learned there," Jake's mom said.

Instead of being at risk of dropping out of school, Jake is now making A's and B's and has his sights set on college.

Then there's Natalie Rios.

Only 17, Natalie easily could have become part of the 68 percent of teen-age mothers nationally who fail to complete high school.

Instead, she enrolled last year in a newly formed Teen Parenting class at Hobbs High School and learned how to care for her son, now 2 years old. The class featured a teacher who made home visits and a curriculum that covered everything from the ABCs of giving birth to courtroom tactics for securing child support payments.

Along the way, Natalie and other pregnant students who are sometimes shunned by classmates picked up some important lessons about self-esteem.

"When you have a baby and you're young, people seem to look at you like you have less respect for yourself," Natalie told the local newspaper. "But I don't feel that way in this class. In here, everybody's equal. Everybody's accepted."

While we're certainly not thrilled about the rising epidemic of teenage pregnancy, we choose not to bury our head in the sand about a national epidemic. Recognizing that our students must deal with emotional issues while also struggling to do their math homework, classes like Teen Parenting help them through a difficult stage in life without passing judgment.

To be honest, however, not everybody is pleased with the innovative programs offered by Hobbs Schools.

If you asked the 39-year-old mother who this summer became the first person found guilty of violating the compulsory school attendance law, she probably wouldn't be too happy with us.

But her four children are in school today, thanks largely to an aggressive attendance policy that saw Hobbs hire four truancy prevention specialists.

Charged with going to the homes of students with chronic absences, truancy officers—two of them bilingual—provided one-on-one contact to parents who often times are too intimidated to visit their children's schools. Working with a combination of agencies including juvenile probation, Children Youth and Family and the judicial system, we learned that parents are often as frustrated about how to keep their kids in school as we are.

Providing a united front helps.

So much so that absence rates at all levels was reduced by almost half in the first year of the truancy program's existence.

In the rare case of parents who refuse to take responsibility for getting their children to school, the long-arm of the law is a last resort.

And the guilty verdict rendered by a judge—the 39-year-old mom I mentioned earlier avoided jail time but was fined—got the woman's attention as well as other parents in the community whom we've decided to hold responsible for their children's behavior.

Here's another face for you.

Michael Ware was only 17 when he graduated from HHS two years ago but already had 42 college credits when he enrolled at Colorado State University a couple months later. Ware took advantage of an Advanced Placement program that other school districts in the state are now emulating.

While Michael was clearly never at risk of dropping out of school, here's what makes our AP program so innovative: It snags more than overachievers in its academic net.

More than 40 percent of students from Hobbs—a largely blue-collar town that now has a 51 percent majority of Hispanic students—took at least one AP or pre-AP class last year. Our goal is to exceed 70 percent.

"For a public school taking all kids as they come, 40 percent is by far the highest of any school in New Mexico and it's comparable to the very best AP programs in the country," AP New Mexico director Pat Cleaveland said recently.

The AP program attracts an abundance of students to its classes because it offers financial reward: Make a 3, 4 or 5 on your AP exam and you get earn a paycheck as well as college credits. Get high enough scores and you take home a \$2,000 computer.

In addition, teachers whose students do well on AP exams get a bonus.

Suddenly, being smart is fashionable at Hobbs High School and teachers who provide tutoring before and after school to motivate students have more than a feeling of self-satisfaction to show for their efforts.

But AP classes aren't limited to the high school. Pre-AP curriculum in the junior high and Core Knowledge, a "cultural literacy" curriculum at the elementary school, means our students will be even better prepared for the tough classes when they encounter them.

Our research also shows that thematic instruction embodied by Core improves the learning and test scores of bilingual kids.

By choosing to set the bar higher, Hobbs has succeeded in raising the academic standards for all students—even those who don't enroll in AP classes when they arrive at the high school. Nonetheless, those students have also benefited by having teachers who've undergone the specialized AP training or Core Knowledge training all instructors receive.

Of course, not all kids go the AP route.

Plenty of students are enrolled in vocational programs that take advantage of nearby New Mexico Junior College.

More than 100 students get on a bus each day at Hobbs High School and ride to a college campus where they are enrolled in classes like auto mechanics or cos-

metology. Computer assisted drafting or metal working are also examples of skill they can learn on equipment purchased by the Hobbs Schools system.

Or students can stay put at the high school and grow geraniums in the horticulture program. They can go to a barn to groom pigs or learn how to judge sheep in a FFA program that consistently has winners in national high school competition.

Or they can take advantage of newly outfitted technology labs—a \$250,000 facility that opened this semester at the high school or a \$300,000 lab at the middle school.

It's no secret that conducting experiments in a simulated wind tunnel or being the director of their own, digital movie appeals to students who aren't "pen-and-pencil" learners. And it's no secret that continually updating technology labs is what it takes to make the high school relevant to today's students.

Hobbs voters recently passed a bond issue which will keep our schools current with this century's technological revolution—the equivalent to the previous century's industrial revolution.

In addition to cutting edge computers, the high school offers a career technological education plan that turns out students with skills that allow them to get an entry level job anywhere in the business world upon graduation.

Back in the classroom, curriculum is annually reviewed by a committee of students, teachers and parents and updated each year to reflect the changing times. Courses like Afro-American Studies and Latin American Studies give minorities a chance to learn about their own cultures while Anglos have the chance to explore something beyond the traditional coursework.

It's a simple fact of life, however, that some kids don't feel comfortable in a standard classroom.

Recognizing that non-traditional students are those most at risk of dropping out, Hobbs schools offers a number of individually-tailored education plans.

They include an alternative school where students work at their own pace.

"These aren't bad kids," former Assistant Superintendent Bruce Hardison said. "They are kids that we were losing—kids that had special needs, kids who had children of their own or problems at home. Some students just aren't going to fit into a big school setting where they are part of a student body with 1,500 or more students."

Enrollment at the Alternate School has increased from about 25 students a decade ago to more than 110 now. In addition, we've increased the teaching staff from two to ten and doubled classroom space while eliminating the stigma associated with Alternate School.

Night school has also increased its enrollment at roughly the same pace. Offered four nights a week in two, four-hour sessions, the classes give students who've fallen behind on credits a chance to catch up and graduate on time. Night school complements an aggressive summer school program that gives students the same opportunity.

In addition, a variety of five work-study programs give students a chance to earn money—sometimes necessary to support a household—while also earning school credit. And the fact that Hobbs High School closed its campus in 1993—meaning that hundreds of students weren't making a run for the "Taco Bell border" at lunchtime each day—also helped. Some kids never returned from lunch while others came back charged up and distracted from the education process.

Offering fast-food vendors on campus along with the more traditional school lunches gives students a chance to socialize but also kept them focused on school—their 8:30—3:30 job.

There's no one reason that we can point to that accounts for a drop out rate that has been on the decline for seven years running now.

Instead, we've incorporated a mosaic of programs to make school relevant while raising the bar of education for today's learners. Learners who include everybody from unwed mothers to teens who are capable of saving lives but might need some direction. Each student matters to us.

The common factor in all of our programs is a realization that the world is changing. And our classes and curriculum must do likewise.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RON HAUGEN

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the Senate Health Education and Pension Committee regarding dropout prevention programs that are currently in operation or needed in the Gadsden Independent School District. The programs that we have are currently focused on the upper elementary, middle school and high school students due to the urgency in improving the academic skill level of these students to enhance their future opportunities for success. The Gadsden Independent School District has implemented the following:

The Desert Pride Academy Alternative School that consists of a credit recovery program for off grade level students who are behind and long term student disciplinary placement in grades 9-12 both of which are currently supported by District operational funds.

The Title 1 Reading/Math Labs are academic support classes for incoming 9th grade students who are at-risk for becoming drop-outs. In lieu of retaining students in the 8th grade, the district has placed entering students in a 9th grade program focused on reading and mathematics instruction. These students have scored in the bottom quartile overtime on the state's norm-referenced test. These laboratory courses are supported by Title 1 funds.

I believe that the long term strategy for drop-out prevention in border communities lies in having the ability to work with children prior to their official entry into a public school system, such as the Gadsden Independent School District and not in re-mediating students late in their educational career. I propose that monies be focused on early childhood literacy programs for three and four year olds. This is needed in a district such as Gadsden that has a low socio-economic base, and where 85% of the students enter into kindergarten as monolingual Spanish speakers. The District has found that these students enter Kindergarten two to three years behind their peers. The monies needed for this type of literacy program would provide the necessary developmental opportunities that are prevalent in communities that have a higher socioeconomic status. Equity of opportunity could be achieved by access to this type of structure that would allow the children in the Gadsden District to acquire English language skills leading to earlier proficiency. To equalize the playing field, I believe it is imperative that districts such as ours be afforded the resources and opportunity to provide early literacy programs for our three and four year olds.

Our most current experience in this school district with resources and opportunities for drop-out prevention was a pilot partnership with New Mexico State University and funded by the U.S. Department of Education entitled The Drop-out Prevention Demonstration Program. This pilot allowed us to work with students in grades 6-9 that were at-risk of dropping out. This was also a literacy program for older students that focused on improving literacy skills by providing in-school and after-school services. After one year of funding the U.S. Department of Education did not fund this project even though an application was submitted for three additional years. The weaknesses in the application indicated that the program focused on literacy skills and not drop-out prevention. I strongly disagree with their assumptions that literacy is not the underlying factor that leads to students dropping out. As a District and a community of educators we believe that this is the primary cause that leads students to the point of making a decision to leave school. A dropout situation is generally not created by a single incident but more often by a series of incidences most of which are related to years and years of frustration and lack of success on the part of the student. The lack of literacy skills to function effectively and competitively with their peers is important early in a student's education. I believe we could have made a difference in the middle years of school had this project been funded.

I believe that a funding structure is needed to support early literacy and struggling reader programs that will address No Child Left Behind. Reading is a fundamental right for all people in this country.

Thank-you for the opportunity to express the needs of the Gadsden Independent School District.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF EVERETTE HILL

ABSTRACT

To prevent youth at-risk from dropping out of school, educators and service providers must utilize a system of integrated service delivery, a network of partnerships involving community, business and parental involvement, and systems of assessment that can accurately, and continually, evaluate youths' achievement, needs, and support systems. These elements will effectively make the educational experience relevant to youth, their families, and their future goals and needs. In New Mexico, a model program (Project Succeed) has implemented these strategies with practical results.

There is a significant amount of research available that outlines the challenges individuals, communities and municipalities face when youth discontinue their secondary education prematurely. All told, young men and women who drop out of school cost the country substantial amounts of money during their lifetimes in lost revenue, unrealized taxes, and the increased burden placed on public resources and

programs. It seems quite obvious that to rectify these issues. We must do something about the phenomenon of school dropouts. But what?

Before we begin a discussion about dropout prevention and the efficacy of certain elements, we must first acknowledge that there are many strategies, concepts, and programs that, over the years, have been very effective. For example, there is a significant amount of research indicating that keeping class sizes small, arranging classrooms to enhance the environmental learning experience, creating support structures outside of the classroom, increased individualized attention/instruction, and utilizing experiential learning activities are all effective strategies when attempting to engage youth at-risk, and compel them to stay in school. Similarly, one can point to many programs that have utilized the aforementioned strategies, and added some other critical elements, to produce effective dropout prevention programming. An example of this is the Project Succeed Program.

Project Succeed is a school-based dropout prevention and school-to-work program that incorporates additional elements into the educational environment including job placement, work readiness training, incentives and rewards, case management and counseling, professional development schedules for staff, and community service learning projects for students. Conceptually, this approach is used to bridge the gap between what educational elements that youth at-risk deem relevant in the real world and what needs to be taught to make the educational experience more personal and utilitarian. We have seen that these types of approaches can be highly successful; Project Succeed has been touted as a model program for youth at-risk, and has enjoyed a greater than 88% retention rate of its' students since its' inception in 1986.

So, if the aforementioned is true, that we already have concepts, strategies, and model programs that have been proven to defeat the spectre of school dropouts, then why do we still have to contend with the very troubling and socially expensive prospect that nearly one out of every 20 high school students will dropout of high school?

It is my assertion that among the myriad of reasons why youth at-risk continue to dropout of school is that: 1) the assessment process is much too linear and myopic, 2) the aftercare or follow-up regimen, when there is one, is restricted in scope and limited in duration, and 3) systems of integrated service delivery, often utilized by community based organizations and health and human service agencies, have not always found their way into school systems within the framework of a partnership.

ASSESSMENT

As we continue to strive toward developing programs that are effective in reducing the number of dropouts we have annually, we must begin to redefine what assessment means to our youth at-risk and our programs. Assessment likely exists in many, if not all, of the dropout prevention programs in the state of New Mexico. Regardless, it is not whether assessment exists but rather how assessment tools, information gleaned from the assessment process, and the manner in which assessment is performed that determines how effective the process will be.

Often times, the assessment process can be much too linear and myopic to be effective. For example, many professionals contend that having the "right" assessment tool that yields the "correct" course of action is the most important detail when it comes to assessment. However, the assessment tools should be chosen for their ability to extract meaningful information from those being assessed, even if it requires a non-traditional approach, or more than one instrument to yet the information needed to be helpful. Although there are many relevant assessment tools and inventories when working with potential dropouts (TABS tests, NCFAS, CFARS, etc), often the greatest assessment "tool" any program has is the professional performing the assessment. A well-trained professional, armed with no more than a blank sheet of paper, can do a wonderful job of initially assessing for a young person's condition, home-life, support systems, educational status, interests, career goals, and employment status, amongst other things. Using a "blank-sheet" approach to assessment not only deconstructs the linear, and oft times tedious process of assessment, it allows for a more cyclical approach to the activity.

Youth at-risk need to experience success in achieving milestones in the continuous improvement of their situation, and providers need to be able to continually assess for their changing needs at each plateau. Using an approach such as the "blank-sheet", in conjunction with standard assessment tools, is the kind of strategy that might help get professionals out of the linear process of conducting assessments, and overcome the myopia that can often be experienced when a specific assessment leads to an unambiguous set of challenges that directly correlates with an explicit strategy for remediation.

AFTER-CARE/FOLLOW-UP

In my experience, after-care, or follow-up planning has probably been the most important, yet under-developed concept when working with youth at risk of dropping out. The idea of after-care is monumentally important because this is the process when at-risk youth who have benefited from programmatic services must now muster the courage to use their newfound skills and abilities within their systems, or spheres of influence. Many times, there are external pressures, or internal embattlements, that preclude youth from utilizing new skills. Within a comprehensive after-care plan, service professionals maintain contact with youth often enough to know when such difficulties arise, and these service professionals would then be in a position to provide assistance and facilitate a successful completion.

For example, a young person who has recently acquired the ability to utilize library resources and its' myriad technologies must be able to continually access those resources, augment his/her skill set, and have an opportunity to display his/her talents or make mistakes in an environment that safeguards that particular kind of vulnerability and provides for a positive learning experience. Youth who have gained a certain rapport with staff of a program sometimes need to return, albeit briefly to the forum that encouraged growth and exploration, with the individuals who provided the initial support system.

So many times, if there is a plan for after-care, it is either not defined in its' elements and outcomes, or it is of such short duration that it renders itself ineffective. In a best-case scenario, all dropout prevention programs would have an after-care or follow-up plan that was actively engaged, making adjustments to the plan of care, until each student involved with the program graduated from high school.

SYSTEMS OF INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY

Many schools, community-based organizations, and health and human service agencies utilize a system of integrated service delivery; however, it is rare for any of these entities to have a communal and equal partnership when it comes to their interaction. For many, the school cannot be "all things to all people", but I believe that the schoolhouse is one of the most significant places in our communities every day.

The onus is not, and should not be, solely on the schools and its' educators to rectify the dropout problem. The problem is much larger than any one school district, agency or individual. But the schools do have an undeniable role to play in the amelioration of the phenomenon due to the simple fact that all American children are expected to attend school from the time they are four or five until they are seventeen or eighteen. Most Americans spend nearly a quarter of their lives in elementary and secondary schools, so the importance of our schools should surprise no one.

I would assert that an effectual change in the status of our dropouts will occur when schools begin to create partnerships where all of the stakeholders have ownership in the education process, and subscribe to a school-linked integrated services approach.

By definition, integrated services are "the coordinated delivery of health, education, prevention and social services designed to improve the quality of life for individuals and their families" (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.) These services can include counseling, job placement, literacy remediation, case management, health care, mental health services, parenting and parental involvement, and mentoring, to name a few.

The Center for the Future of Children (1992) states:

"In a school-linked approach to integrating services for children, (a) services are provided to children and their families through a collaboration among schools, healthcare providers, and social service agencies: (b) the schools are among the central participants in planning and governing the collaborative effort: and (c) the services are provided at, or are coordinated by personnel located at, the school or a site near the school. Most often, the school-linked approach requires agencies that typically provide health and social services off the school site to move some of their staff and; or services to the school. Although school personnel are actively-involved in identifying children who need services, they are not typically the actual providers of the services" (p.7)

Using a system of integrated service, linked with the school system through a partnership that stresses mutual ownership, a sharing of resources, seamless delivery of service both on site and off, is an approach that gives all of the stakeholders involved in youth at-risk education an opportunity to effect change within the system. In this way, keeping our young people from dropping out of school truly becomes a communal effort, where everyone is responsible for our young people's edu-

cation and everyone is responsible for sustaining the collaborative efforts of effective projects.

SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND PENSION COMMITTEE REPORT
Submitted by
BEVERLY AVERITT
ESPAÑOLA VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL
November 1, 2002

The high dropout rate among high school students is a national, state, and local problem. Last week's New Mexican printed an article entitled "N.M. on Top of Most Stupid List" which put New Mexico's ranking for the dropout rate at number 40.

Española Valley High School's dropout rate has been as high as 18% in the last few years, was slightly above 12% for both the 1999-2000 and the 2000-2001 school years, and slightly below 10% last year. The New Mexico State Department of Education requires a dropout rate of not more than 7% to be considered "meeting standards" in high school ratings.

Due to our continuously high dropout rate at Española Valley High School, the local school board appointed a "Stay in School Blue Ribbon Task Force" during the 2001-2002 school year. This committee was assigned the task of gathering data and conducting necessary research in an attempt to identify the underlying issues related to our high dropout rate. The task force was to then use this data to make recommendations based on their findings that might help reduce the dropout rate. The Blue Ribbon Task Force consisted of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members (including local and state police, Los Alamos National Laboratory employees, Northern New Mexico Community College employees, business owners, and representatives from Senator Bingaman's office).

One of the activities of the Task Force was to interview both mid school and high school students, as well as students who had "dropped out." The Task Force found that

there were almost as many reasons given by students for dropping out as there were dropouts. Some of those reasons were:

- Classes were too hard
- Classes were too easy and students became bored
- Pregnancy
- Student's need and/or desire to work
- Students missed too much school for various reasons
- Students failed courses, did not make them up in summer school, and got too far behind in credits to graduate with their class
- Not enough parental support
- Students felt that no one really cared whether they succeeded or dropped out

A recurring theme among the student's reasons was that they didn't feel there were enough adults at the high school that knew them or cared about them.

Several members of the Task Force had heard of a "Credentialing Program" being run at Rio Rancho High School. Members visited Rio Rancho for a day, learning all they could about this program and bringing back as much information as possible. Using this program as a basis, the first recommendation to the board was:

1. **Create a student support program in which teachers, administrators and counselors are assigned up to 18 students to mentor, advise and support.**

A committee of high school teachers and parents, with student input and support along with personnel support and grants from the LANL Foundation, has been working on the design of a somewhat similar program for EVHS. The program has been named "Team Up—EVHS" and was put into effect on Monday (October 28). A copy of the "Team Up EVHS" Program overview is attached.

The main goals of this program are:

- Improve communication with parents through scheduled ½ hour individual appointments to be conducted twice yearly
- Build teams and team spirit in order to raise the graduation rate
- Inform parents and encourage students

We hope to make parents feel more welcome at the school, help them become more

involved in their child's education, keep them more informed on school activities, impress upon them the importance of student attendance, give them testing information and results, review graduation requirements, help them select methods to help their student catch up on credits, etc. We also envision the students now having an adult at the school who is their mentor, as well as a team of students who can help them succeed. A packet containing the questionnaires to be used to obtain student information, a sample lesson plan, the student/parent appointment scheduling form, and other information will be made available at the hearing on Friday.

A complete copy of the Blue Ribbon Task Force findings and recommendations will also be made available at the hearing.

Española Valley High School also applied for, and received, one of three grants from the State Department of Education, to be run through the New Mexico Department of Health. This is a two-year grant which is to target between 30 and 50 freshmen who are determined to be "at risk" of dropping out of high school.

The grant calls for the hiring of a Case Manager, who will not only work with these students but also their parents. The case manager will schedule appointments with the students and parents, make home visits when necessary, bring in outside agencies to work with the families if it is believed necessary, and do everything in their power to help make these students successful. This program will go hand-in-hand with the Team Up Program, giving additional support to 9th graders, where the majority of the dropouts occur. The case manager has been hired and began on Monday (October 23).

A third program implemented this year is the AVID Program. AVID is an acronym for Advancement Via Individual Determination. A team made up of seven

faculty members, counselors, and administrators attended a week-long AVID training in San Diego this past summer. Incoming freshmen students, along with their parents, were then contacted, the program was explained, and the students were interviewed. A total of 23 freshmen students were selected to participate in the program. Targeted students were those whose parents had not attended college but the students had the potential to succeed with grade point averages of 2.0 to 3.5, were considered high-risk students, but students who were willing to try something new to prepare them for college.

During class time, students are taught a variety of techniques in order to make them more successful students. These techniques include note-taking, asking questions, sitting up straight in class and sitting in the front of the classroom. The students also work with tutors who are taught to ask questions of the students, not just give them answers. In addition, there are guest speakers and presenters who work with the class to provide them with valuable information that can be used for classes now or can give students thoughts for the future.

Parents are expected to be involved with the students in many ways, such as asking questions of their students at home, meeting with the student's teachers on a regular basis, helping in the classroom or even doing public relations to help the program grow for the future. AVID was selected as a program for the school on the basis of its success starting in California and spreading to 23 other states and 15 foreign countries. The success rate for AVID students who finish college is 93%.

Another initiative that is just beginning but which will continue within the school for the next several years is the New Mexico Initiative on School-wide Positive Behavior Support. We were one of twenty-three schools statewide to be selected to participate in

training to change the way schools look at behavior. The idea is to notice and reward positive behavior rather than focusing on the negative. The research behind this shows that suspending and punishing students does not work and change needs to happen. A team of people from the school, including one grandparent/guardian participated in the first of several trainings. The team has a coach working with it and the coach participates in additional trainings. Through the trainings, the team will learn positive alternatives and interventions versus the typical exclusionary and punishing solutions.

The above are four of the new programs being implemented at Española Valley High School during the 2002-2003 school year. One (AVID) started at the beginning of the year, two of them (Team Up and PASS—Positive Assistance for Students—the New Mexico Department of Health Grant) have only begun this week, and the New Mexico Initiative on Positive Behavior Support has not yet begun. The first staff in-service on PASS will be held on Friday, November 1.

We are putting much time, effort, money, and faith into these programs with the hope that we will be able to decrease the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate. At this point, only time will tell.

Supporting Documents include:

1. Blue Ribbon Task Force Report
2. Team Up—EVIIS, Overview & Forms
3. New Mexico Department of Health Grant and Joint Powers Agreement
4. AVID information packet
5. NM Initiative on School-wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS) general information

Team Up EVHS Program Overview

- Team Up EVHS is a project designed to promote parental involvement, enhance academic performance, increase the graduation rate and build team spirit within the high school. The implementation date for this program is October 28 of the current school year.
- A key factor in initiating this program is research conducted by the Blue Ribbon Stay in School Task Force during the 2001-2002 school year. As part of the study, students who had dropped out of school were interviewed by task force members. A recurring theme among the students was that they didn't feel there were enough adults at the high school who knew them or cared about them. One goal of the Team Up program is to increase the graduation rate by creating teams of students led by teachers, administrators and counselors who would work alongside parents and community volunteers to make each student feel valued and welcomed.
- Each teacher, administrator and counselor will be assigned a group of approximately 18 students. The team leaders will be responsible for overseeing their student teams and meeting with them at least seven times a year. In addition to meeting with the students on a team basis, the team leaders will also be responsible for setting up after hours appointments with parents or guardians twice a year to review grades, test scores, attendance, and performance in conjunction with graduation requirements. It will be the job of the team leaders to talk with both students and parents about navigating a successful high school career. Lesson plans will be prepared for each session with the students, and guidelines for conducting the conferences with the parents will be given to the team leaders so that they will feel well-prepared to implement the program.
- A Team Up coordinator will be hired to create a system of records for each student including a current class schedule, copies of test scores, a parent information form, a graduation checklist and an up-to-date transcript of credits and grades. A student directory will also be created listing the teams and names of students with an explanation of the program. A directory will be mailed to all parents of high school students so every parent will know the name of his student's team leader and how to contact him or her.
- A secondary goal of Team Up is to use the team leader as a liaison for student and parent opportunities. An entering freshman will have the same team leader for all four years thus allowing for a more long-lasting relationship, one in which the team leader can establish close ties to both student and family. Developing and nurturing this relationship should create a positive high school experience for the students.
- The twice yearly parent/student/team leader conferences will also provide an opportunity for team leaders to inform parents about upcoming events such as testing for the CTBS, the NMHSCE or the ACT. Conference times can also be used to notify parents about important financial aid workshops or ways to enable their students to recover credits or enhance their performance through concurrent enrollment with NNMCC or by enrolling in advanced placement courses.
- Team Up also envisions team activities which will forge ties not only between the team leaders and the students but among the students as well. Planting a tree, improving the school facility or planning a family barbeque are ideas with which Team Up could be

involved in order to foster a sense of belonging to a team which is then part of the larger school environment.

- Though Team Up cannot be counted as a panacea for all that ails us, it can help to create an environment which will foster confident, goal-oriented students and satisfied, well-informed parents.

Program Implementation, First Semester

October 28, 2002

First team meeting with students

- Ice breaker
- Explanation of program to students
- Hand out lanyards with EVHS Team Up inscription
- Create team names/slogans
- Take photos for team poster
- Fill out student questionnaire
- Have students take appointment forms home to parents

November 4, 2002

Second team meeting with students

- Explain graduation requirements
- Focus on juniors and seniors
- Inform students about ways to add credits (night school, summer school, concurrent enrollment)
- Collect appointment forms from students

November 18, 19, 20, 21 – afternoons and evenings

- Conduct student/parent conferences
- Review folders
- Explain graduation requirements
- Discuss post graduation plans
- Obtain student and parent feedback through surveys
- Recruit Team Up volunteers
-

November 22, 2002 – No school for the high school

December 2002 (date to be confirmed)

- Have a celebration with teams over the success of the first conference (food and beverage to be provided by the LANL Foundation)

[Whereupon, at 11:27 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]